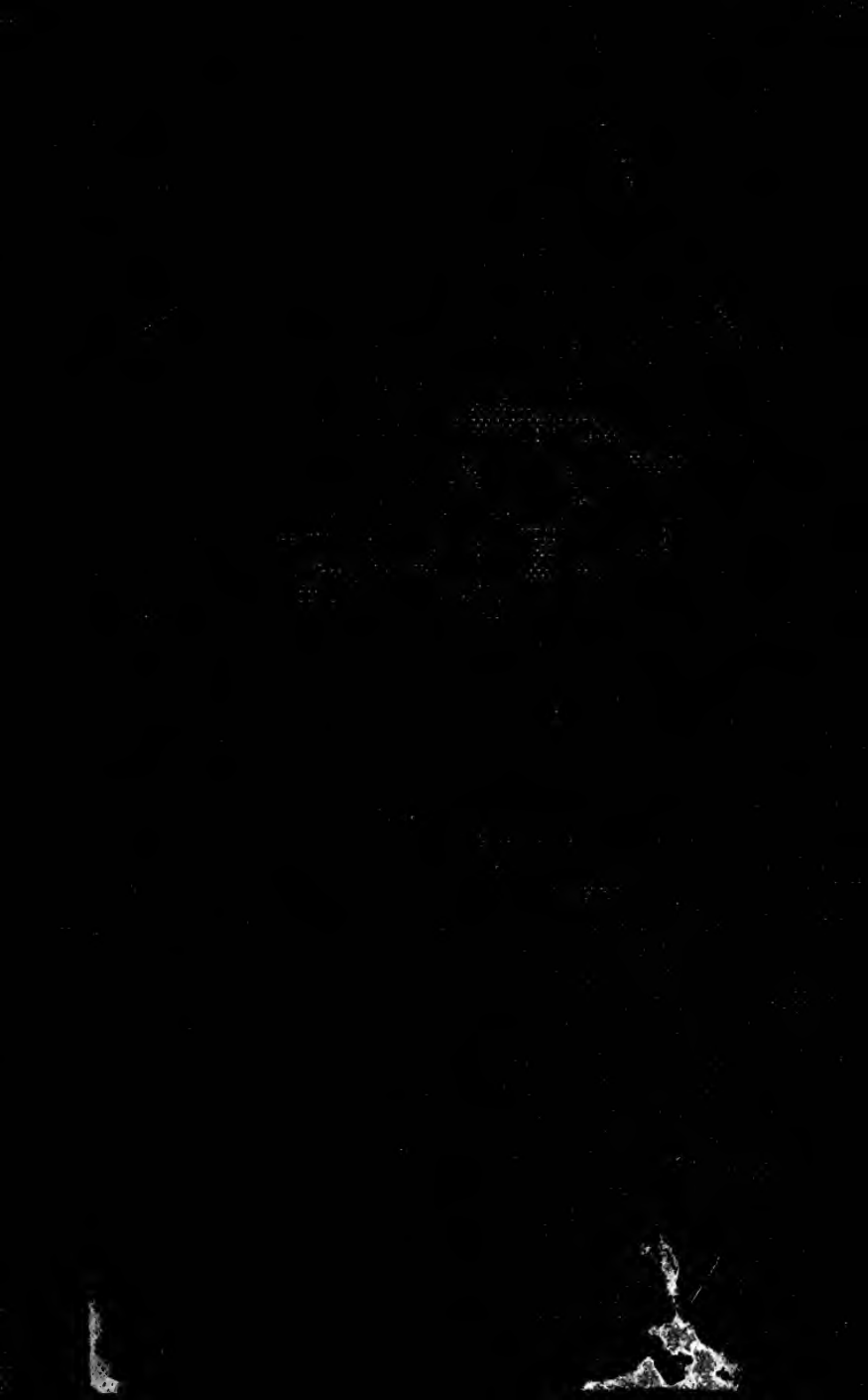

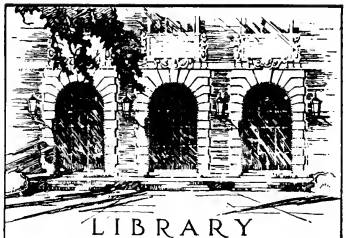

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THE UNCLASSED.

VOL. I.

THE UNCLASSED

A Novel

BY

GEORGE GISSING

AUTHOR OF "WORKERS IN THE DAWN."

"Hast du nicht gute Gesellschaft gesehn? Es zeigt uns dein Büchlein
Fast nur Gaukler und Volk, ja was noch niedriger ist.
Gute Gesellschaft hab' ich gesehn; man nennt sie die gute
Wenn sie zum kleinsten Gedicht keine Gelegenheit giebt."—GOETHE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL

LIMITED

1884

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TO

M. C. R.

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THE UNCLASSED.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

SCHOOL.

THERE was strange disorder in Miss Rutherford's school-room, wont to be the abode of decorum. True, it was the gathering-time after the dinner-hour, and Miss Rutherford herself was as yet out of sight; but things seemed to be going forward of a somewhat more serious kind than a game of romps among the children. There were screams and sobbings, hysterical cries for help; some of the little girls were crowding round an object in one corner of the room, others appeared to be getting as far away from it as possible, hiding their pale faces in their hands, or looking at one another with terrified

eyes. At length one more thoughtful than the rest sped away out of the room, and stood at the bottom of the stairs, calling out her teacher's name as loud as she could. A moment, and Miss Rutherford came hastening down, with alarmed aspect, begging to be told what was the matter. But the summoner had turned and fled at the first sight of the lady's garments. Miss Rutherford darted into the schoolroom, and at once there was quietness, save for half-choked sobs here and there, and a more ominous kind of moaning from the crowded corner.

"Gracious goodness, children, what is it? Who's that lying on the floor? Harriet Smales! What *ever* has happened?"

The cluster of children had fallen aside, exposing a strange picture. On the ground lay a girl of twelve, her face deadly pale, save in the places where it was dabbled with fresh blood, which still streamed from a gash on the right side of her forehead. Her eyes were half opened; she was just recovering consciousness; a moan came from her at intervals. She had for support the lap and arms of a little girl perhaps two

years younger than herself. Heedless of the flowing blood, this child was pressing her pale cheek against that of the wounded one, whose name she kept murmuring in pitiful accents, mixed with endearing epithets. So unconscious was she of all around, that the falling back of the other children did not cause her to raise her eyes; neither was she aware of Miss Rutherford's first exclamations, nor yet of the question which was next addressed to her by the horrified school-mistress.

"How did it happen? Some of you run at once for a doctor,—Dr. Williams in Grove Road,—Oh, quick!—Ida Starr, how *did* it happen?"

Ida did not move, but seemed to tighten her embrace. The other pupils all looked fearfully hither and thither, but none ventured to speak.

"Ida!" repeated Miss Rutherford, dropping on her knees by the two, and beginning to wipe away some of the blood with her handkerchief. "Speak, child! Has some one gone for the doctor?—How was it done?"

The face at length turned upon the questioner was almost as ghastly and red-stained as that it had been pressed against. But it had become self-controlled; the dark eyes looked straight forward with an expression marvellously full of meaning in one so young; the lips did not tremble as they spoke.

"I did it, Miss Rutherford. I have killed Harriet. I, and nobody else."

"You? How, child?"

"I killed her with the slate, Miss Rutherford; this slate, look."

She pointed to a slate without a frame which lay on the floor. There were sums worked on the uppermost side, and the pencil-marks were half-obliterated. For a moment the schoolmistress's amazement held her motionless, but fresh and louder moans recalled her to the immediate necessities of the case. She pushed Ida Starr aside, and, with the help of a servant-girl who had by this time appeared in the room, raised the sufferer into a chair, and began to apply what remedies suggested themselves. The surgeon whom several of the children had

hastened to seek only lived a few yards away, and his assistant was speedily present. Harriet Smales had quite recovered consciousness, and was very soon able to give her own account of the incident. After listening to her, Miss Rutherford turned to the school-children, who were now seated in the usual order on benches, and spoke to them with some degree of calm.

"I am going to take Harriet home. Lucy Wood, you will please to see that order is preserved in my absence; I shall only be away twenty minutes, at the most. Ida Starr, you will go up into my sitting-room, and remain there till I come to you. All take out your copy-books; I shall examine the lines written whilst I am away."

The servant, who had been dispatched for a cab, appeared at the door. Harriet Smales was led out. Before leaving the house, Miss Rutherford whispered to the servant an order to occupy herself in the sitting-room, so as to keep Ida Starr in sight.

Miss Rutherford, strict disciplinarian when

her nerves were not unstrung, was as good as her promise with regard to the copy-books. She had returned within the twenty minutes, and the first thing she did was to walk along all the benches, making a comment here, a correction there, in another place giving a word of praise. Then she took her place at the raised desk whence she was wont to survey the little room.

There were present thirteen pupils, the oldest of them turned fifteen, the youngest scarcely six. They appeared to be the daughters of respectable people, probably of tradesmen in the neighbourhood. This school was in Lisson Grove, in the north-west of London; a spot not to be judged of from its name by those ignorant of the locality; in point of fact a somewhat dingy street, with a mixture of shops and private houses. On the front door was a plate displaying Miss Rutherford's name,—nothing more. That lady herself was middle-aged, grave at all times, kindly, and, be it added, fairly competent as things go in the world of school. The room was rather bare, but the good fire necessitated

by the winter season was not wanting, and the plain boarding of the floor showed itself no stranger to scrubbings. A clock hanging on the wall ticked very loudly in the perfect stillness as the schoolmistress took her seat.

She appeared to examine a book for a few moments, then raised her head, looked at the faces before her with a troubled expression, and began to speak.

"I wish to know who can give me any account of the way in which Harriet Smales received her hurt. Stop! Hands only, please. And only those raise their hands who actually saw the blow struck, and overheard *all* that led to it. You understand, now? One, two, three,—seven altogether, that is quite enough. Those seven will wait in the room at four o'clock till the others have all gone. Now I will give the first class their sums."

The afternoon passed very slowly to teacher and pupils alike. When the clock struck four, work was put away with more than the usual noise and hurry. Miss Rutherford seemed for a time to be on the point of making some new

address to the school before the children departed, but eventually she decided to keep silence, and the dismissal was got over as quickly as possible. The seven witnesses remained, solemnly seated at their desks, all anxious-looking.

"Lucy Wood," Miss Rutherford began, when the door was closed and quiet, "you are the eldest. Please tell me all you can of this sad affair."

There was one of the seven faces far more discomposed than the rest, a sweet and spiritual little countenance; it was tear-stained, red-eyed; the eager look, the trembling lips spoke some intimate cause of sympathy. Before the girl addressed had time to begin her answer, this other, one would have said in spite of herself, intervened with an almost agonized question.

"Oh, Miss Rutherford, is Harriet really dead?"

"Hush, hush!" said the lady, with a shocked look. "No, my dear, she is only badly hurt."

"And she really won't die?" pleaded the child, with an instant transfiguration of look.

"Certainly not, certainly not. Now be quiet, Maud, and let Lucy begin."

Lucy, a sensible and matter-of-fact girl, made a straightforward narration, the facts of which were concurred in by her companions. Harriet Smales, it seemed, had been exercising upon Ida for some days her utmost powers of irritation, teasing her, as Lucy put it, "beyond all bearing." The cause of this was not unknown in the school, and Miss Rutherford remembered the incident from which the malice dated. Harriet had copied a sum in class from Ida's slate—she was always copying from somebody—and the teacher, who had somehow detected her, asked Ida plainly whether such was not the case. Ida made no reply, would not speak, which of course was taken as confirmatory evidence, and the culprit had accordingly received an imposition. Her spleen, thus aroused, Harriet vented upon the other girl, who, she maintained, ought to have stoutly denied the possibility of the alleged deceit, and so have saved her. She gave poor Ida no rest, and her persecution had culminated this afternoon; she began to "call Ida's mother

names," the result of which was that the assailed one suddenly snatched up her slate, and, in an uncontrollable fit of passion, struck her tormentor a blow with it upon the forehead.

"What did she call Ida's mother?" inquired Miss Rutherford, all at once changing her look curiously.

"She called her a bad woman."

"Was that all?"

"No, please, Miss Rutherford," put in Maud, eagerly. "She said she got her living in the streets. And it isn't true. Ida's mother 's a lady, and doesn't sell things in the streets!"

The teacher looked down, and was silent.

"I don't think I need ask any more questions," she said presently. "Run away home all of you. What is it, my dear?"

Maud, she was about eleven, and small for her age, had remained behind, and was looking anxiously up into Miss Rutherford's face.

"May I wait for Ida, please," she asked, "and —and walk home with her? We go the same way."

"Not to-night, dear; no, not to-night. Ida

Starr is in disgrace. She will not go home just yet. Run away, now, there's a good girl."

Sadly, sadly was the command obeyed, and very slowly did Maud Enderby walk along the streets homeward, ever turning back to see whether perchance Ida might not be behind her.

Miss Rutherford ascended to her sitting-room. The culprit was standing in a corner with her face to the wall.

"Why do you stand so?" asked the teacher, gravely, but not very severely.

"I thought you'd want me to, Miss Rutherford."

"Come here to me, child."

Ida had clearly been crying for a long time, and there was still blood on her face. She seemed to have made up her mind that the punishment awaiting her must be dreadful, and she resolved to bear it humbly. She came up, still holding her hands behind her, and stood with downcast eyes. The hair which hung down over her shoulders was dark brown, her eye-brows strongly marked, the eyes themselves rather deep-set. She wore a pretty plum-coloured dress, with a dainty little apron in

front; her whole appearance bespeaking a certain taste and love of elegance in the person who had the care of her.

"You will be glad to hear," said Miss Rutherford, "that Harriet's hurt is not as serious as we feared at first. But she will have to stay at home for some days."

There was no motion or reply.

"Do you know that I am quite afraid of you, Ida? I had no idea that you were so passionate. Had you no thought what harm you might do when you struck that terrible blow?"

But Ida could not converse; no word was to be got from her.

"You must go home now," went on the school-mistress, after a pause, "and not come back till I send for you. Tell your mother just what you have done, and say that I will write to her about you. You understand what I say, my child?"

The punishment had come upon her. Nothing worse than this had Ida imagined; nay, nothing so bad. She drew in her breath, her fingers

wreathed themselves violently together behind her back. She half raised her face, but could not resolve to meet her teacher's eyes. On the permission to go being repeated, she left the room in silence, descended the stairs with the slow steps of an old person, dressed herself mechanically, and went out into the street. Miss Rutherford stood for some time in profound and troubled thought, then sighed as she returned to her usual engagements.

The following day was Saturday, and therefore a half-holiday. After dinner, Miss Rutherford prepared herself for walking, and left home. A quarter of an hour brought her to a little out-of-the-way thoroughfare called Boston Street, close to the west side of Regent's Park, and here she entered a chemist's shop, over which stood the name Smales. A middle-aged man of very haggard and feeble appearance stood behind the counter, and his manner to the lady as she addressed him was painfully subservient. He spoke very little above a whisper, and as though suffering from a severe sore-throat, but it was his natural voice.

"She's better, I thank you, madam; much better, I hope and believe; yes, much better."

He repeated his words nervously, rubbing his hands together feverishly the while, and making his eye-brows go up and down in a curious way.

"Might I see her for a few moments?"

"She would be happy, madam, very happy; oh yes, I am sure, very happy! If—if you would have the kindness to come round, yes, round here, madam, and—and to excuse our poor sitting-room. Thank you, thank you. Harriet, my dear, Miss Rutherford has had the great, the very great, goodness, to visit you,—to visit you personally,—yes. I will leave you, if—if you please,—h'm, yes."

He shuffled away in the same distressingly nervous manner, and closed the door behind him. The school-mistress found herself in a dark little parlour, which smelt even more of drugs than the shop itself. The window looked out into a dirty back-yard, and was almost concealed with heavy red curtains. As the eyes got accustomed to the dimness, one observed that the

floor was covered with very old oil-cloth, and that the articles of furniture were few, only the most indispensable, and all very shabby. Everything seemed to be dusty and musty. The only approach to an ornament was a framed diploma hanging over the mantelpiece, certifying that John Alfred Smales was a duly qualified pharmaceutical chemist. A low fire burned in the grate, and before it, in a chair which would probably have claimed the title of easy, sat the girl Harriet Smales, her head in bandages.

She received Miss Rutherford rather sulkily, and as she moved, groaned in a way which did not seem the genuine utterance of pain. After a few sympathetic remarks, the teacher began to touch upon the real object of her visit.

"I have no intention of blaming you, Harriet; I should not speak of this at all, if it were not necessary. But I must ask you plainly what reason you had for speaking of Ida Starr's mother as they say you did. Why did you say she was a bad woman?"

"It's only what she is," returned Harriet, sullenly, and with much inward venom.

"What do you mean by that? Who has told you anything about her?"

Only after some little questioning the fact was elicited that Harriet owed her ideas on the subject to a servant-girl in the house, whose name was Sarah.

"What does Sarah say, then?" asked Miss Rutherford.

"She says she isn't respectable, and that she goes about with men, and she's only a common street-woman," answered the girl, speaking evidently with a very clear understanding of what these accusations meant. The school-mistress looked away with a rather shocked expression, and thought a little before speaking again.

"Well, that's all I wanted to ask you, Harriet," she said. "I won't blame you, but I trust you will do as I wish, and never say such things about any one again, whoever may tell you. It is our duty never to speak ill of others, you know; least of all when we know that to do so will be the cause of much pain and trouble. I hope you will very soon be able to come back again to us. And now I will say good-bye."

In the shop Miss Rutherford renewed to the chemist her sincere regret for what had taken place.

"Of course I cannot risk the recurrence of such a thing," she said. "The child who did it will not return to me, Mr. Smales."

Mr. Smales uttered incoherent excuses, apologies, and thanks, and shufflingly escorted the lady to his shop-door.

Miss Rutherford went home in trouble. She did not doubt the truth of what Harriet Smales had told her, for she herself had already entertained uneasy suspicions, dating indeed from the one interview she had had with Mrs. Starr, when Ida was first brought to the school, and deriving confirmation from a chance meeting in the street only a few days ago. It was only too plain what she must do, and the necessity grieved her. Ida had not shown any especial brilliancy at her books, but the child's character was a remarkable one, had displayed a strength which might eventually operate either for good or for evil. With careful training, it seemed at present very probable that the good would predominate. But

the task was not such as the school-mistress felt able to undertake, bearing in mind the necessity of an irreproachable character for her school if it were to be kept together at all. The disagreeable secret had begun to spread; all the children would relate the events of yesterday in their own homes; to pass the thing over was impossible. She sincerely regretted the step she must take, and to which she would not have felt herself driven by any ill-placed prudery of her own. On Monday morning it must be stated to the girls that Ida Starr had left.

In the mean time, it only remained to write to Mrs. Starr, and make known this determination. Miss Rutherford thought for a little while of going to see Ida's mother, but felt that this would be both painful and useless. It was difficult even to write, desirous as she was of somehow mitigating the harshness of this sentence of expulsion. After half-an-hour spent in efforts to pen a suitable note, she gave up the attempt to write as she would have wished, and announced the necessity she was under in the fewest possible words.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

IDA STARR, dismissed by the schoolmistress, ran quickly homewards. She was unusually late, and her mother would be anxious. Still, when she came within sight of the door, she stopped and stood panting. How should she tell of her disgrace? It was not fear that made her shrink from repeating Miss Rutherford's message; nor yet shame, though she would gladly have hidden herself away somewhere in the dark from every eye; her overwhelming concern was for the pain she knew she was going to cause one who had always cherished her with faultless tenderness,—tenderness which it had become her nature to repay with a child's unreflecting devotion.

Her home was in Milton Street. On the

front door was a brass-plate which bore the inscription: "Mrs. Ledward, Dressmaker"; in the window of the ground-floor was a large card announcing that "Apartments" were vacant. The only light was one which appeared in the top storey, and there Ida knew that her mother was waiting for her, with tea ready on the table as usual. Mrs. Starr was seldom at home during the child's dinner-hour, and Ida had not seen her at all to-day. For it was only occasionally that she shared her mother's bedroom; it was the rule for her to sleep with Mrs. Ledward, the landlady, who was a widow and without children. The arrangement had held ever since Ida could remember; when she had become old enough to ask for an explanation of this, among other singularities in their mode of life, she was told that her mother slept badly, and must have the bed to herself.

But the night had come on, and every moment of delay doubtless increased the anxiety she was causing. Ida went up to the door, stood on tiptoe to reach the knocker, and gave her usual two distinct raps. Mrs. Ledward opened the

door to her in person; a large woman, with pressed lips and eyes that squinted very badly; attired, however, neatly, and looking as good-natured as a woman who was at once landlady and dressmaker could be expected to look.

"How 's 't you're so late?" she asked, without looking at the child; her eyes, as far as one could guess, fixed upon the houses opposite, her hands in the little pockets on each side of her apron. "Your mother 's poorly."

"Oh, then I shall sleep with her to-night?" exclaimed Ida, forgetting her trouble for the moment in this happy foresight.

"Dessay," returned Mrs. Ledward, laconically.

Ida left her still standing in the doorway, and ran up-stairs. The chamber she went into—after knocking and receiving permission to enter, according to the rule which had been impressed upon her—was a tolerably furnished bedroom, which, with its bright fire, tasteful little lamp, white coverlets and general air of fresh orderliness, made a comfortable appearance. The air was scented, too, with some pleasant odour of a not too pungent kind. But the table lacked one

customary feature; no tea was laid as it was wont to be at this hour. The child gazed round in surprise. Her mother was in bed, lying back on raised pillows, and with a restless, half-pettish look on her face.

"Where ever have you been?" she asked, querulously, her voice husky and feeble, as if from a severe cold. "Why are you so late?"

Ida did not answer at once, but went straight to the bed and offered the accustomed kiss. Her mother waved her off.

"No, no; don't kiss me. Can't you see what a sore throat I've got? You might catch it. And I haven't got you any tea," she went on, her face growing to a calmer expression as she gazed at the child. "Ain't I a naughty mother? But it serves you half right for being late. Come and kiss me; I don't think it's catching. No, perhaps you'd better not."

But Ida started forward at the granted leave, and kissed her warmly.

"There now," went on the hoarse voice, complainingly, "I shouldn't wonder if you catch it, and we shall both be laid up at once.

Oh, Ida, I do feel that poorly, I do! It's the draught under the door; what else can it be? I do, I do feel that poorly!"

She began to cry miserably. Ida forgot all about the tale she had to tell; her own eyes overflowed in sympathy. She put her arm under her mother's neck, and pressed cheek to cheek tenderly.

"Oh, how hot you are, mother! Your face is on fire, poor, poor mother! Shall I get you a cup of tea, dear? Wouldn't it make your throat better?"

"Perhaps it would; I don't know. Don't go away, not just yet. You'll have to be a mother to me to-night, Ida. I almost feel I could go to sleep, if you held me like that."

She closed her eyes, but only for a moment, then started up anxiously.

"What am I thinking about! Of course you want your tea."

"No, no; indeed I don't, mother."

"Nonsense; of course you do. See, the kettle is on the hob, and I think it's full. Go away; you make me hotter. Let me see you

get your tea, and then perhaps it'll make me feel I could drink a cup. There, you've put your hair all out of order; let me smooth it. Don't trouble to lay the cloth; just use the tray; it's in the cupboard."

Ida obeyed, and set about the preparations. Compare her face with that which rested sideways upon the pillows, and the resemblance was as strong as could exist between two people of such different ages: the same rich-brown hair, the same strongly-pencilled eyebrows; the deep-set and very dark eyes, the fine lips, the somewhat prominent jaw-bones, alike in both. The mother was twenty-eight, the daughter ten, yet the face on the pillow was the more childish at present. In the mother's eyes was a helpless look, a gaze of unintelligent misery, such as one could not conceive on Ida's countenance; her lips, too, were weakly parted, and seemed trembling to a sob, whilst sorrow only made the child close hers the firmer. In the one case a pallor not merely of present illness, but that wasting whiteness which is only seen on faces accustomed to borrow artificial hues; in the

other, a healthy pearl-tint, the gleamings and gradations of a perfect complexion. The one a child long lost on weary, woful ways, knowing, yet untaught by, the misery of desolation; the other a child still standing upon the misty threshold of unknown lands, looking around for guidance, yet already half feeling that the sole guide and comforter was within.

It was strange, that talk which followed between mother and daughter. Lotty Starr (that was the name of the elder child, and it became her much better than any more matronly appellation,) would not remain silent, in spite of the efforts it cost her to speak, and her conversation ran on the most trivial topics. Except at occasional moments, she spoke to Ida as to one of her own age, with curious neglect of the relationship between them; at times she gave herself up to the luxury of feeling like an infant dependent on another's care; and cried just for the pleasure of being petted and consoled. Ida had made up her mind to leave her disclosure till the next morning; impossible to grieve her mother with such shocking news when she was

so poorly. Yet the little girl with difficulty kept a cheerful countenance; as often as a moment's silence left her to her own reflections she was reminded of the heaviness of heart which made speaking an effort. To bear up under the secret thought of her crime and its consequences required in Ida Starr a courage different alike in quality and degree from that of which children are ordinarily capable. One compensation alone helped her; it was still early in the evening, and she knew there were before her long hours to be spent by her mother's side.

"Do you like me to be with you, mother?" she asked, when a timid question had at length elicited assurance of this joy. "Does it make you feel better?"

"Yes, yes. But it's my throat, and you can't make that better; I only wish you could. But you are a comfort to me, for all that; I don't know what I should do without you. Oh, I sha'n't be able to speak a word soon, I sha'n't!"

"Don't, don't talk, dear. I'll talk instead, and you listen. Don't you think, mother dear, I could—could always sleep with you? I

wouldn't disturb you; indeed, indeed I wouldn't! You don't know how quiet I lie. If I'm wakeful ever I seem to have such a lot to think about, and I lie so still and quiet, you can't think. I never wake Mrs. Ledward, indeed. Do let me, mother; just try me!"

Lotty broke out into passionate weeping, wrung her hands, hid her face in the pillow. Ida was terrified, and exerted every effort to console this strange grief. The outburst only endured a minute or two, however; then a mood of vexed impatience grew out of the anguish and despair, and Lotty pushed away the child fretfully.

"I've often told you, you can't, you mustn't bother me. There, there; you don't mean any harm, but you put me out, bothering me, Ida. Tell me, what do you think about when you lay awake? Don't you think you'd give anything to get off to sleep again? I know I do; I can't bear to think; it makes my head ache so."

"Oh, I like it. Sometimes I think over what I've been reading, in the animal book, and the geography-book; and—and then I begin my

wishing-thoughts. And oh, I've such lots of wishing-thoughts, you couldn't believe!"

"And what are the wishing-thoughts about?" inquired the mother, in a matter-of-fact way.

"All sorts of things. Sometimes I wish father hadn't died, and I wish we were still living in the beautiful little house, as you tell me you used to. It must be so nice to have a father."

"I don't see what more he could do for you than I do," broke in Lotty, turning away her face, and speaking irritably.

"Oh, I don't mean that, dear," the child hastened to say, with soothing affection. "I think it's partly because if I'd a father he'd be kind to you as well, and you wouldn't cry so often."

"Well, never mind about *that* wishing-thought. What else?"

"Then I often wish I was grown up. I feel tired of being a child; I want to be a woman. Then I should know so much more, and I should be able to understand all the things you tell me I can't now. I don't care for playing at games and going to school."

"You'll be a woman soon enough, Ida," said Lotty, with a quiet sadness unusual in her. "But go on; what else?"

"And then I often wish I was a boy. It must be so much nicer to be a boy. They're stronger than girls, and they know more. Don't you wish I was a boy, mother?"

"Yes I do, I often do!" exclaimed Lotty. "Boys aren't such a trouble, and they can go out and shift for themselves."

"Oh, but I won't be a trouble to you," exclaimed Ida. "When I'm old enough to leave school,—"

She interrupted herself, for the moment she had actually forgotten the misfortune which had come upon her. But her mother did not observe the falling of her countenance, nor yet the incomplete sentence.

"Ida, have I been a bad mother to you?" Lotty sobbed out presently. "If I was to die, would you be sorry?"

"Mother!"

"I've done my best, indeed I've done my best for you! How many mothers like me

would have brought you up as I've done? How many, I'd like to know? And some day you'll hate me; oh yes, you will! Some day you'll wish to forget all about me, and you'll never come to see where I'm buried, and you'll get rid of everything that could remind you of me. How I wish I'd never been born!"

Ida had often to comfort her mother in the latter's fits of low spirits, but had never heard such sad words as these before. The poor child could say nothing in reply; the terrible thought that she herself was bringing new woes to be endured almost broke her heart. She clung about her mother's neck and wept passionately.

It was the climax of the evening's suffering. Lotty shortly after took a draught from a bottle which the child reached out of a drawer for her, and lay pretty still till drowsiness came on. Ida undressed and crept to her side. They had a troubled night, and, when the daylight came again, Lotty was no better. Ida rose in anguish of spirit, torturing herself to find a way of telling what must be told. Yet she had another respite; her mother said that, as it was Satur-

day, she might as well stay away from school and be a little nurse. And the dull day wore through; the confession being still postponed.

But by the last post at night came Miss Rutherford's letter. Ida was still sitting up, and Lotty had fallen into a doze, when the landlady brought the letter upstairs. The child took it in, answered an inquiry about her mother in a whisper, and returned to the bedside. She knew the handwriting on the envelope. The dreaded moment had come.

She must have stood more than a quarter of an hour, motionless, gazing on her mother's face, conscious of nothing but an agonized expectation of seeing the sleeper's eyes open. They did open at length, and quickly saw the letter.

"It's from Miss Rutherford, mother," said Ida, her own voice sounding very strange to herself.

"Oh, is it?" said Lotty, in the hoarse whisper which was all she could command. "I suppose she wants to know why you didn't go. Read it to me."

Ida read, and, in reading, suffered as she never did again throughout her life.

"'DEAR MRS. STARR,

"'I am very sorry to have to say that Ida must not return to school. I had better leave the explanation to herself; she is truthful, and will tell you what has compelled me to take this step. I grieve to lose her, but have really no choice.

"'I am, yours truly,

"'H. RUTHERFORD.'"

No tears rose; her voice was as firm as though she had been reading in class; but she was pale and cold as death.

Lotty rose in bed and stared wildly.

"What have you done, child?—what ever have you done? Is—is it anything—about *me?*"

"I hit Harriet Smales with a slate, and covered her all over with blood, and I thought I'd killed her."

She could not meet her mother's eyes; stood with head hung down, and her hands clasped behind her.

"What made you do it?" asked Lotty, in amazement.

"I couldn't help it, mother; she—she said you were a bad woman."

Ida had raised her eyes with a look of love and proud confidence. Lotty shrank before her, clutched convulsively at the bed-clothes, then half raised herself and dashed her head with fearful violence against the wall by which the bed stood. She fell back, half stunned, and lay on the pillows, whilst the child, with outstretched hands, gazed horror-struck. But in a moment Ida had her arms around the distraught woman, pressing the dazed head against her breast. Lotty began to utter incoherent self-reproaches, unintelligible to her little comforter; her voice had become the merest whisper; she seemed to have quite exhausted herself. Just now there came a knock at the door, and Ida was relieved to see Mrs. Ledward, whose help she begged. In a few minutes Lotty had come to herself again, and whispered that she wished to speak to the landlady alone. The latter persuaded Ida to go down-stairs for a while, and the child, whose tears had begun to flow, left the room, sobbing in anguish.

"Ain't you better then?" asked the woman, with an apparent effort to speak in a sympathetic tone which did not come easily to her.

"I'm very bad," whispered the other, drawing her breath as if in pain.

"Aye, you've got a bad cold, that's what it is. I'll make you some gruel presently, and put some rum in it. You don't take care of yourself: I told you how it 'ud be when you came in with those wringin' things on, on Thursday night."

"They've found out about me at the school," gasped Lotty, with a despairing look, "and Ida's got sent away."

"She has? Well, never mind, you can find another, I suppose. I can't see myself what she wants with so much schoolin', but I suppose you know best about your own affairs."

"Oh, I feel that bad! If I get over this, I'll give it up—God help me, I will! I'll get my living honest, if there's any way. I never felt so bad as I do now."

"Pooh!" exclaimed the woman. "Wait a bit till you get rid of your sore throat, and you'll think different. Poorly people gets all sorts

o' fancies. Keep a bit quiet now, and don't put yourself out so."

"What are we to do? I've only got a few shillings——"

"Well, you'll have money again some time, I suppose. You don't suppose I'll turn you out in the streets? Write to Fred on Monday, and he'll send you something."

They talked till Lotty exhausted herself again, then Ida was allowed to re-enter the room. Mrs. Ledward kept coming and going till her own bed-time, giving what help and comfort she could in her hard, half-indifferent way. Another night passed, and in the morning Lotty seemed a little better. Her throat was not so painful, but she breathed with difficulty, and had a cough. Ida sat holding her mother's hand. It was a sunny morning, and the bells of neighbouring churches began to ring out clearly on the frosty air.

"Ida," said the sick woman, raising herself suddenly, "get me some note-paper and an envelope out of the box; and go and borrow pen and ink, there's a good child."

The materials were procured, and, with a great effort, Lotty managed to arrange herself so as to be able to write. She covered four pages with a sad scrawl, closed the envelope, and was about to direct it, but paused.

"The bells have stopped," she said, listening. "It's half-past eleven. Put on your things, Ida."

The child obeyed, wondering.

"Give me my purse out of the drawer. See, there's a shilling. Now, say this after me: Mr. Abra'm Woodstock, Number —, St. John Street Road."

Ida repeated the address.

"Now listen, Ida. You put this letter in your pocket; you go down into the Mary'bone road; you ask for a 'bus to the Angel. When you get to the Angel, you ask your way to Number —, St. John Street Road; it isn't far off. Knock at the door, and ask if Mr. Abr'am Woodstock is in. If he is, say you want to see him, and then give him this letter,—into his own hands, and nobody else's. If he isn't in, ask when he will be, and, if it won't be long, wait."

Ida promised, and then, after a long gaze, her mother dropped back again on the pillow, and turned her face away. A cough shook her for a few moments. Ida waited.

"Well, ain't you gone?" asked Lotty, faintly.

"Kiss me, mother."

They held each other in a passionate embrace, and then the child went away.

She reached Islington without difficulty, and among the bustling and loitering crowd which obstructs the corner at the Angel found some one to direct her to the street she sought. She had to walk some distance down St. John Street Road, in the direction of the City, before discovering the house she desired to find. When she reached it, it proved to be a very dingy tenement, the ground-floor apparently used as offices; a much-worn plate on the door exhibited the name of the gentleman to whom her visit was, with his professional description added. Mr. Woodstock was an accountant.

She rang the bell, and a girl appeared. Yes, Mr. Woodstock was at home. Ida was told to enter the passage, and wait.

A door at her right hand as she entered was slightly ajar, and voices could be heard from the other side of it. One of these voices very shortly raised itself in a harsh and angry tone, and Ida could catch what was said.

"Well, Mr. What's-your-name, I suppose I know my own business rather better than you can teach me. It's pretty clear you've been doing your best for some time to set the people against me, and I'm damned if I'll have it! You go to the place on religious pretences, and what your real object may be I don't know; but I do know one thing, and that is, I won't have you hanging about any longer. I'll meet you there myself, and if it's a third floor window you get pitched out of, well it won't be my fault. Now I don't want any more talk with you. This is most folks' praying-time; I wonder you're not at it. It's *my* time for writing letters, and I'd rather have your room than your company. I'm a plain-spoken man, you see, a man of business, and I don't mince matters. To come and dictate to me about the state of my houses and of my tenants ain't a

business-like proceeding, and you'll excuse me if I don't take it kindly. There's the door, and good morning to you!"

The door opened, and a young man, looking pale and dismayed, came out quickly, and at once left the house. Behind him came the last speaker. At the sight of the waiting child, he stood still, and the expression of his face changed from sour annoyance to annoyed surprise.

"Eh? Well?" he exclaimed, looking closely at Ida, his eye-brows contracting.

"I have a letter for Mr. Abr'am Woodstock, sir."

"Well, give it here. Who's it from?"

"Mrs. Starr, sir."

"Who's Mrs. Starr? Come in here, will you?"

His short and somewhat angry tone was evidently in some degree the result of the interview that had just closed, but also pretty clearly an indication of his general manner to strangers. He let the child pass him, and followed her into the room with the letter in his hand. He did not seem able to remove his eyes from her face. Ida, on her side, did not dare

to look up at him. He was a massively built, grey-headed man of something more than sixty. Everything about him expressed strength and determination, power alike of body and mind. His features were large and heavy, but the forehead would have become a man of strong intellect; the eyes were full of astonishing vital force, and the chin was a physiognomical study, so strikingly did its moulding express energy of character. He was clean-shaven, and scarcely a seam or wrinkle anywhere broke the hard, smooth surface of his visage; his complexion was clear and rosy as that of a child. His hands were of enormous size, yet well-formed, and the finger-nails scrupulously kept. In fact, his whole person showed a certain fastidiousness and delicacy. He was dressed in decent black; a black silk bow at his throat; only a small space of very white shirt-front showing; on his waistcoat a heavy gold watch-guard. On the whole, a man to be afraid of; in all probability a man whom no one had ever yet loved, and who was very capable of dispensing with affection.

Still regarding Ida, he tore open the envelope. At the sight of the writing he, not exactly started but, moved his head rather suddenly, and again turned his eyes upon the messenger.

"Sit down," he said, pointing to a chair. The room was an uncomfortable office, with no fire. He himself took a seat deliberately at a desk, whence he could watch Ida, and began to read. As he did so, his face remained unmoved, but he looked away occasionally, as if to reflect.

"What's your name?" he asked, when he had finished, beginning, at the same time, to tear the letter into very small pieces, which he threw into a waste-paper basket.

"Ida, sir,—Ida Starr."

"Starr, eh?" He looked at her very keenly, and, still looking, and still tearing up the letter, went on in a hard, unmodulated voice. "Well, Ida Starr, it seems your mother wants to put you in the way of earning your living." The child looked up in fear and astonishment. "You can carry a message? You'll say to your mother that I'll undertake to do what I can for you, on

one condition, and that is that she puts you in my hands and never sees you again."

"Oh, I can't leave mother!" burst from the child's lips involuntarily, her horror overcoming her fear of the speaker.

"I didn't ask you if you could," remarked Mr. Abraham Woodstock, with something like a sneer, tapping the desk with the fingers of his right hand. "I asked whether you could carry a message. Can you, or not?"

"Yes, I can," stammered Ida.

"Then take *that* message, and tell your mother it's all I've got to say. Run away."

He rose and stood with his hands behind him, watching her. Ida made what haste she could to the door, and sped out into the street.

CHAPTER III.

ANTECEDENTS.

IT would not have been easy to find another instance of a union of keen intellect and cold heart so singular as that displayed in the character of Abraham Woodstock. The man's life had been strongly consistent from the beginning; from boyhood a powerful will had borne him triumphantly over every difficulty, and in each decisive instance his will had been directed by a shrewd intelligence which knew at once the strength of its own resources and the multiplied weaknesses of the vast majority of men. In the pursuit of his ends he would tolerate no obstacle which his strength would suffice to remove. In boyhood and early manhood the exuberance of his physical power was wont to manifest itself in brutal self-assertion.

At school he was the worst kind of bully, his ferociousness being tempered by no cowardice. Later on, he learned that a too demonstrative bearing would on many occasions interfere with his success in life; he toned down his love of muscular victory, and only allowed himself an outbreak every now and then, when he felt he could afford the indulgence. Put early into an accountant's office, and losing his father about the same time, (the parent, who had a diseased heart, was killed by an outburst of fury to which Abraham gave way on some trivial occasion,) he had henceforth to fight his own battle, and showed himself very capable of winning it. In many strange ways he accumulated a little capital, and the development of commercial genius put him at a comparatively early age on the road to fortune. He kept to the business of an accountant, and by degrees added several other distinct callings. He became a lender of money in several shapes, keeping both a loan-office and a pawnbroker's shop. In middle age he won considerably on the race-course, but, for sufficient reasons, dropped that pursuit entirely

before he had turned his fiftieth year. As a youth he had made a good thing of games of skill, but did not pursue them as a means of profit when he no longer needed the resource. He continued, however, to love the games for their own sake, and still delighted in chess. It was but seldom, however, that he indulged the liking, and for the simple reason that he could not support a defeat. To be beaten roused his vile temper to such a fearful pitch that he with difficulty refrained from physical violence. Few people who knew him ventured to play with him and win; at the same time very few were capable of defeating him.

He married at the age of thirty. This, like every other step he took, was well planned; his wife brought him several thousand pounds, being the daughter of a retired publican with whom Woodstock had had business relations. He would have told you, in his brutally ingenuous way, that his wife was doubly profitable to him; she helped him to capital, and saved him the expenditures which had hitherto been rendered necessary by his bodily temperament. For

Abraham was typical of that class of men in whom, though they are utterly devoid of sentiment, the lusts of the flesh rule strongly. And he had at no time crucified his appetite. He was acquisitive, but not miserly; absolute confidence in his own powers had always held him free from the pressure of miserable economies. The history of his *amours de jeunesse*, to say nothing of those which had succeeded upon the death of his wife, would supply an instructive, though perhaps scarcely edifying, chapter. In another man such a life might have been called dissipated; to Abraham Woodstock the word would in no sense apply. Never for a moment did he lose his sense of the fit adjustment of means and ends; never did he throw away a halfpenny. At his present age of three-score his habits had not greatly changed, except that he was perhaps a trifle more fastidious than he had been twenty years back. He felt as yet none of the forebodings of old age, and talked of another twenty years to be spent in very much the same way.

This house in St. John Street Road he had

occupied since he was five-and-thirty, having gone to it shortly after his wife's death. The accommodation was all he wanted, and he had been led to take the premises in consequence of having been employed as a lad in this very office. The thought flattered him; he liked to compare that day with this; for the love of power ever in the last resort proved his ruling passion, and he was not above gratifying it in the most ignoble ways. His former employer, who had lived here, failed in business just when Abraham was beginning to flourish, and the latter had gone out of his way to be appointed receiver of the estate, in which capacity he had bullied and humiliated the unfortunate man to his heart's content. Thereafter he had lent him money, had exercised a horrible tyranny over the poor bankrupt for many years, and had only seen the end of his sport when the man was happy enough to die. And all this out of no definite motive of revenge; merely in brutal exultation over one who had once employed and paid him. The house was at present solidly furnished in the

dwelling part, though, as a matter of course, without any display of taste. The ground-floor consisted of offices; above were eating-room, bed-room, and study; on the second floor the sleeping-room of the two servants he kept, and chambers used for storing miscellaneous goods, which came into his hands in the way of business. One of these chambers communicated by a door with the adjoining house, which tenement was also rented by our friend. Its ground-floor was a pawnbroker's shop, the business being in the hands of Mr. Woodstock, though another name was painted up. To this shop he owed very much of his wealth.

I have spoken of his "study," and thereby hangs another item of character. On entering this room one was puzzled to account for its peculiar appearance. A table in the midst was entirely covered with a great litter of newspapers and periodicals; the same kind of literature was heaped about the floor here and there. Two walls were quite hidden by book-shelves, the library presenting anything but an attractive

appearance. There were several hundreds of Blue-books, a complete set of Hansard, a complete series of the Annual Register, and other volumes of the same character. The remaining free space around the room was covered with maps of various countries, statistical charts, almanacks. The explanation of this singular phenomenon lay in the fact that, from his earliest manhood, Abraham Woodstock had devoted himself with astonishing zest to the study of contemporary politics. His ardour had increased with knowledge, and at the present time he was probably unsurpassed among laymen in intelligent familiarity with the details of English and foreign political life. Not a statesman of the leading countries with whose history, actual policy, and probable prospects he was not well acquainted. *La haute politique* was the playground of his imagination; he seized his *Times* every morning with a vehement interest in the latest telegrams from the various capitals. In home affairs he could have instructed many a cabinet minister; the blunders of leader-writers were his repertory of humour; the incapacity of

members was the stock subject of his scornful comment. No Bill found its way into either House without his making himself more or less familiar with its details; so-called "great" measures were the delight of his—I was going to say soul, but will ask the reader to substitute some other word. In short, the engrossing actuality of current politics was ideally adapted to the man's mental and moral nature. Here he was dealing with power, power in what was, to him, its highest manifestations. He liked to imagine himself a party-leader, a prime minister, nay, a monarch. He devised ideal policies for this state or that; he schemed for wars; he elaborated treaties. At election times he was a leading man in his borough, as active practically in the petty details of registering, canvassing, bribing, polling, as in fancy when higher spheres were concerned. What a worthy citizen was Abraham Woodstock! What an enlightened, free, and independent elector! What a patriot! How unfortunate that he was not born Emperor of all the Russias!

To return to his domestic affairs. He had not

been a bad husband. True, his wife dreaded him too much to ever provoke him in the least. During her lifetime his infidelities were of comparatively rare occurrence. Two years after his marriage was born his first and only child, a girl whom they called Lotty. Lotty, as she grew up, gradually developed an unfortunate combination of her parents' qualities; she had her mother's weakness of mind, without her mother's moral sense, and from her father she derived an ingrained stubbornness, which had nothing in common with strength of character. Doubly unhappy was it that she lost her mother so early; the loss deprived her of gentle guidance during her youth and left her without resource against her father's coldness, or harshness. The result was that the softer elements of her character unavoidably degenerated and found expression in qualities not at all admirable, whilst her obstinacy grew the ally of the weakness from which she had most to fear.

But we are not greatly concerned with Lotty Woodstock's early life, and must pass on quickly to later days. Her story was destined to be

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vulgar and commonplace in many of its features, though her subsequent conduct in some degree redeemed it. She was sent to a day-school till the age of thirteen, then had to become her father's housekeeper. Her acquaintances were very few, none of them likely to be of use to her. She was left almost entirely to herself. And the end was, that, having by haphazard got into the society of a medical student, she allowed herself to be seduced, under promise of marriage. Marriage drew no nearer, but the consequences of her mistake soon rendered it impossible to conceal what had happened. Rather than face her father with such a disclosure, she left home, and threw herself upon the mercy of the man who had assisted her to go astray. He was generous enough to support her for about a year, during which time her child was born. Then his help ceased.

The familiar choice lay before her: home again, the streets, or starvation. Hardship she could not bear; the second alternative she shrank from on account of her child; she determined to face her father. For him she had no affection, and knew that he did not love her; only desperation could

drive her back. She came one Sunday evening, at which time she knew he would most probably be sitting in his study, absorbed in Blue-books. Mr. Woodstock was at home, and, without letting the servant say who was come, she went up and entered his presence, the child in her arms. Abraham rose and looked at her calmly. Her disappearance had not troubled him, though he had exerted himself to discover why and whither she was gone, and her return did not visibly affect him. She was a rebel against his authority, —so he viewed the matter,—and consequently quite beyond the range of his sympathies. He listened to all she had to say, beheld unmoved her miserable tears, and, when she became silent, coolly delivered his ultimatum. For her he would procure a situation, whereby she could earn her living, and therewith his relations to her would end; the child he would put into other hands and have it cared for, but Lotty would lose sight of it for ever. The girl hesitated, but the maternal instinct was very strong in her; the little one began to cry, as if fearing separation from its mother; she decided to refuse.

"Then I shall go on the streets!" she exclaimed, passionately. "There's nothing else left for me."

"You can go where you please," returned Abraham.

To do her justice, she did not take this course at once. She tried to obtain work, but was far too weak to succeed in this attempt, the hardest of all tasks in our most humanitarian age. She got into debt with her landlady, and only took the inevitable step when at length absolutely turned adrift.

That was not quite ten years gone by; she was then but eighteen. Let her have lost her child, and she would speedily have fallen into the last stages of degradation. But the little one lived. She had called it Ida, a name chosen from some tale in the penny weeklies which were the solace of her misery. She herself took the name of Starr, that being the name she would have borne, had Ida's father dealt honestly with her. Poor thing, she had a hard, hard problem before her, and the success with which she managed to solve it might, perhaps, make some claim upon

the sympathies of even the most virtuous readers. Balancing the good and evil of this life in her dark little mind, Lotty determined that one thing there was for which it was worth while to make sacrifices, one end which she felt strong enough to keep persistently in view. Ida should be brought up "respectably"—it was her own word; she should be kept absolutely free from the contamination of her mother's way of living; nay, should, when the time came, go to school, and have good chances. And at the end of all this was a far-off hope, a dim vision of possibilities, a vague trust that her daughter might perchance prove for her a means of returning to that world of "respectability" from which she was at present so hopelessly shut out. She would keep making efforts to get into an honest livelihood as often as an occasion presented itself; and Ida should always live with "respectable" people, cost what it might.

The last resolution was only adhered to for a few months. Lotty could not do without her little one, and eventually brought it back to her own home. It is not an infrequent thing to find

little children living in disorderly houses, and the sight of them arouses strange speculations. But Ida's lot was to be a better one than that of the average prostitute's child. In the profession her mother had chosen there are, as in all professions, grades and differences. Lotty was by no means a vicious girl,—please learn to make these not unimportant distinctions, good madam; —she had no love of riot for its own sake; she would greatly have preferred a decent mode of life, had such been practicable. Hence she did not associate herself with the rank and file of abandoned women; her resorts were not the reeking centres of dissipation; her abode was not in the quarters consecrated to her business. In all parts of London there are quiet by-streets of houses given up to lodging-letting, wherein are to be found many landladies, who, good easy souls, trouble little about the private morals of their lodgers, provided and so long as no positive disorder comes about and no public scandal is occasioned. A girl who says that she is occupied in a workroom is—alas!—never presumed to be able to afford the luxury of strict virtue, and if

such a one, on taking a room, says that "she supposes she may have friends come to see her?" the landlady will understand quite well what is meant, and will either accept or refuse her for a lodger as she sees good. To such houses as these Lotty confined herself. After some three or four years of various experiences, she hit upon the abode in Milton Street, and there had dwelt ever since. She got on well with Mrs. Ledward, and had been able to make comfortable arrangements for Ida. The other lodgers in the house were generally very quiet and orderly people, and she herself was quite successful in arranging her affairs so as to create no disturbance. She had her regular *clientèle;* she frequented the roads about Regent's Park and Primrose Hill; and—she supported herself and her child.

I am not sure that Ida Starr's bringing up was in any respect inferior to that she would have received in the home of the average London artisan or small tradesman. At six years old she had begun to go to school; Mrs. Ledward's daughter, a girl of seventeen, took her backwards

and forwards every day. At this school she remained three years and a half; then her mother took her away, and put her under the care of Miss Rutherford, a better teacher. When at home, she either amused herself in Lotty's room, or, when that was engaged, made herself comfortable with Mrs. Ledward's family, with one or other of whom she generally passed the night. She heard no bad language, saw nothing improper, listened to no worse conversation than any of the other children at Miss Rutherford's. Even at her present age of ten it never occurred to her to inquire how her mother supported herself. The charges brought by Harriet Smales conveyed to her mind no conception of their true meaning; they were to her mere general calumnies of vague application. Her mother "bad," indeed! If so, then what was the meaning of goodness? For poor Lotty's devotion to the child had received its due reward herein, that she was loved as purely and intensely as any most virtuous parent could hope to be; so little regard has nature for social codes, so utterly is she often opposed to all the precepts of respecta-

bility! This phrase of Harriet's was the very first breathing against her mother's character that Ida had ever heard. As we have seen, Lotty had thought good to invent fables, for the child's amusement, about her own earlier days. The legend was, that her husband had died about a year after marriage. Of course Ida implicitly believed all this. Her mind contained pictures of a beautiful little house just outside London in which her mother had once lived, and her imagination busied itself with the time when they would both live in just that same way. She was going to be a teacher, so it had been decided in confidential chats, and would one day have a school of her own. In such a future Lotty herself really believed. The child seemed to her extraordinarily clever, and in four more years she would be as old as a girl who had assisted with the little ones in the first school she went to. Lotty, we see, was ambitious. Offers of Mrs. Ledward to teach Ida dressmaking, she had put aside; it was not good enough. Herein we may trace, if we like, some hereditary strain of character.

Yet Ida, as I have said, was not in reality remarkable either for industry or quickness in learning. At both schools she had frequently to be dealt with somewhat severely. Ability she showed from time to time, but in application she was sadly lacking. The books were distasteful to her, more even than to most children; she learned sometimes by listening to the teacher, but seldom the lessons given her to prepare. In fact, she was backward in almost everything; she wrote sadly, and her spelling was managed on *à priori* principles not given to most people to understand. At home there were no books to tempt her to read for herself; her mother never read, and would not have known how to set about giving her child a love for such occupation, even had she deemed it needful. And yet Ida always seemed to have abundance to think about; she would sit by herself for hours, without any childlike employment, and still not seem weary. When asked what her thoughts ran upon, she could not give very satisfactory answers; she was always rather slow in expressing herself, and never chattered, even to

her mother. One queer and most unchildlike habit she had, which, as if thinking it wrong, she only indulged when quite alone; she loved to sit before a looking-glass and gaze into her own face. At such times her little countenance became very sad without any understood reason. Could she, unconsciously, foresee the future in those dark, deep eyes of hers? Did fate speak mysteriously to her in the beautiful lines of her face, and turn her thoughts to things she knew not of?

Ida had a passion for animals. The cat in the house was her especial property; it was her delight to coax puss to sleep in her arms at night, and to this companion she probably talked at greater length and entrusted more secrets than to any one else. Once or twice her mother had taken her to the Zoological Gardens, and Ida was wild with rapture at the beautiful beasts and birds. The ugly ones she regarded with that tender compassion which her face could so well express. It was during the last year that these various traits of her character had begun to exhibit themselves in pronounced

ways. The past summer had been to her a period of unmitigated happiness, for there had come comparatively little bad weather, and sunshine was like wine to Ida. The proximity of the park was a great advantage. During the weeks of summer holiday, she spent whole days wandering about the large, grassy tracts by herself, rejoicing in the sensation of freedom from task-work. If she were especially in luck, a dog would come and play about her, deserting for a minute its lawful master or mistress, and the child would roll upon the grass in delighted sport. Or she would find out a warm, shady nook quite near to the borders of the Zoological Gardens, and would lie there with ear eager to catch the occasional sounds from the animals within. The roar of the lion thrilled her with an exquisite trembling; the calls of the birds made her laugh with joy. Once, three years ago, her mother had taken her to Hastings for a week, and when she now caught the cry of the captive sea-gulls, it brought back marvellous memories of the ocean flashing in the sun, of the music of breakers, of the fresh smell of the

brine. Then again she would stray down to the side of the little lake, and watch the boats moving about; or, better still, observe the strange doings of the soft little ducks and the stately swans. How it made her laugh to see the ducks going after their dinner along the shallow edge of the water! They would paddle slowly along, with keen eye directed to the clear bottom beneath them, then, all at once, down would plunge their heads, and their short tails would remain for a moment perpendicular, their webby little feet keeping up the equilibrium by flapping behind. Oh Ida, Ida! How often in the years to come shall you remember these long, sunny days in Regent's Park, and yearn back to the time when the world's secrets seemed but a hidden joy, and life was one with happiness!

Already there had come upon her the first great grief. She had caused her mother bitter suffering, and her own heart was filled with a commensurate pain. Had she been a little older she would have been troubled ere now by

another anxiety; for the last two years her mother's health had been falling away; every now and then had come a fit of illness, and at other times Lotty suffered from a depression of spirits which left her no energy to move about. Ida knew that her mother was often unhappy, but naturally could not dwell long on this as soon as each successive occasion had passed away. Indeed, in her heart, she almost welcomed such times, since she was then allowed to sleep up-stairs, one of her greatest joys. Lotty was only too well aware of the physical weakness which was gaining upon her. She was mentally troubled, moreover. Ida was growing up; there would come a time, and that very shortly, when it would be necessary either for them to part, or else for herself to change her mode of life. Indeed, she had never from the first quite lost sight of her intention to seek for an honest means of support; and of late years the consciousness of her hopeless position had grown to an ever-recurring trouble. She knew the proposed step was in reality impossible to her, yet she persistently thought and talked of it.

To Mrs. Ledward she confided at least once a week, generally when she paid her rent, her settled intention to go and find work of some kind in the course of the next two or three days; till at length this had become a standing joke with the landlady, who laughed merrily as often as the subject was mentioned. Lotty had of late let her thoughts turn to her father, whom she had never seen since their parting. Not with any affection did she think of him, but, in her despairing moments, it seemed to her impossible that he should still refuse aid if she appealed to him for it. Several times of late she had been on the point of putting her conviction to the test. She had passed his house from time to time, and knew that he still lived there. Perhaps the real reason of her hesitation was, not fear of him, but a dread, which she would not confess to herself, lest he should indeed prove obdurate, and so put an end to her last hope. For what would become of her and of Ida if her health absolutely failed? The poor creature shrank from the thought in horror. The hope connected with her father grew more

and more strong. But it needed some very decided crisis to bring her to the point of overcoming all the apprehensions which lay in the way of an appeal to the stern old man. This crisis had arrived. The illness which was now upon her she felt to be more serious than any she had yet suffered. Suppose she were to die, and Ida to be left alone in the world! Even before she heard of the child's dismissal from school she had all but made up her mind to write to her father, and the shock of that event gave her the last impulse. She wrote a letter of pitiful entreaty. Would he help her to some means of earning a living for herself and her child? She could not part from Ida. Perhaps she had not long to live, and to ask her to give up her child would be too cruel. She would do anything, would go into service, perform the hardest and coarsest toil. She told him how Ida had been brought up, and implored his pity for the child, who at all events was innocent.

When Ida reached home from her visit to the City, she saw her mother risen and sitting by

the fire. Lotty had found the suspense insupportable as she lay still, and, though the pains in her chest grew worse and the feeling of lassitude was gaining upon her, she had half-dressed, and even tried to move about. Just before the child's appearance, she seemed to have sunk into something of a doze on her chair, for, as the door opened, she started and looked about her in doubt.

"Where have you been so long?" she asked, impatiently.

"I got back as quickly as I could, mother," said Ida, in some surprise.

"Got back? Is school over?"

"From the—the place you sent me to, mother."

"What am I thinking of!" exclaimed Lotty, starting to consciousness. "Come here, and tell me. Did you see—see him, Ida? Mr. Woodstock, you know."

"Yes, mother," began the child, with pale face, "and he—he said I was to tell you—"

She burst into tears, and flew to her mother's neck.

"Oh, you won't send me away from you, mother dear? I can't go away from you!"

Lotty felt she knew what this meant. Fear and trouble wrought with her physical weakness to drive her almost distracted. She sprang up, caught the child by the shoulders, and shook her as if in anger.

"Tell me, can't you?" she cried, straining her weak voice. "What did he say? Don't be a little fool! Can't the child speak?"

She fell back again, seized with a cough which choked her. Ida stayed her sobbing, and looked on in terror. Her mother motioned constantly to her to proceed.

"The gentleman said," Ida continued, with calm which was the result of extreme self-control, "that he would take me, but that you were never to see me again."

"Did he say anything else about me?" whispered Lotty.

"No, nothing else."

"Go—go and tell him you'll come,—you'll leave me."

Ida stood in anguish, speechless and motion-

less. All at once her mother seemed to forget what she was saying, and sat still, staring into the fire. Several times she shivered. Her hands lay listlessly on her lap; she breathed with difficulty.

Shortly afterwards, the landlady came into the room. She was alarmed at Lotty's condition. Her attempts to arouse the sick woman to consciousness were only partly successful. She went down-stairs again, and returned with another woman, a lodger in the house. These two talked together in low tones. The result of their colloquy was that Mrs. Ledward dressed Lotty as well as she could, whilst the other left the house and returned with a cab.

"We're going to take your mother to the hospital," said Mrs. Ledward to the child. "You wait here till we come back, there's a good girl. Now, hold up a bit, Lotty; try and walk down-stairs. That's better, my girl."

Ida was left alone.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTMAS IN TWO HOMES.

WHEN Ida Starr was dismissed from school it wanted but a few days to the vacations. The day which followed her mother's removal to the hospital was Christmas Eve. For two hours on the afternoon of Christmas Day, Ida sat in silence by the bedside in the ward, holding her mother's hand. The patient was not allowed to speak, seemed indeed unable to do so. The child might not even kiss her. The Sister and the nurse looked pityingly at Ida when they passed by, and, when the visitors' time was at an end, and she had to rise and go, the Sister put an orange into her hand, and spoke a few hopeful words.

Night was setting in as she walked homewards; it was cold, and the sky threatened snow. She had only gone a few yards, when

there came by a little girl of her own age, walking with some one who looked like a nurse-maid. They were passing; but all at once the child sprang to Ida's side with a cry of recognition. It was little Maud Enderby.

"Where have you been, Ida? Where are you going? Oh, I'm so glad; I wanted so to see you. Miss Rutherford told us you'd left school, and you weren't coming back again. Aren't you really? And sha'n't I see you?"

"I don't know; I think not," said Ida. In her premature trouble she seemed so much older than her friend.

"I told Miss Rutherford you weren't to blame," went on Maud, eagerly. "I told her it was Harriet's own fault, and how shockingly she'd behaved to you. I expect you'll come back again after the holidays, don't you?"

Ida shook her head, and said nothing.

"But I shall see you again?" pleaded the little maid. "You know we're always going to be friends, aren't we? Who shall I tell all my strange dreams to, if I lose you?"

Dreams, in the literal sense of the word.

Seldom a week went by, but Maud had some weird vision of the night to recount to her friend, the meaning of which they would together try to puzzle out; for it was an article of faith with both that there were meanings to be discovered, and deep ones. Maud often shuddered and grew pale as she whispered of awful shapes, and of words dimly remembered, but unintelligible to the waking mind. Life perchance would read the riddles.

Ida promised that she would not allow herself to be lost to her friend, and they kissed, and went their several ways. Never again to meet, but each to be an unperceived agent in the other's lot; to suffer, without mutual knowledge, on each other's account.

We leave Ida to her lonely sadness and see how Christmas was spent in two homes not very far from hers. The first is one of which we have already had a glimpse. Throughout the day the door of Mr. Smales's shop had been open, though the shutters were up. But at nightfall it was closed, and the family drew around the tea-table in the parlour which smelt so of drugs.

It was their only sitting-room, for as much of the house as could be was let to another family. Besides Mr. Smales and his daughter Harriet, there sat at the table a lad of about thirteen, with a dark, handsome face, which had something of a foreign cast. His eyes gleamed at all times with the light of a frank joyousness; he laughed with the unrestraint of a perfectly happy nature. His countenance was capable, too, of a thoughtfulness beyond his years, a gravity which seemed to come of high thoughts or rich imagination. His hair was longer than is usual in English boys, and indeed was so beautiful that to clip it would have been profanation. He bore no trace of resemblance to either the chemist or his daughter, yet was their relative. Mr. Smales had had a sister, who at an early age became a public singer, and so far prospered as to gain some little distinction in two or three opera seasons. Whilst thus engaged, she made the acquaintance of an Italian, Casti by name, fell violently in love with him, and subsequently followed him to Italy. Her courage was rewarded, for there she became the singer's

wife. They travelled for two years, during which time a son was born to them. The mother's health failed; she was unable henceforth to travel with her husband, and, after living in Rome for nearly four years, she died there. The boy was shortly brought back to England by his father, and placed in the care of Mr. Smales, on the understanding that a sum of money should be paid yearly for his support and education. From that day to the present nothing more had been heard of Signor Casti, and all the care of his sister's child had fallen upon poor Smales, who, as you will have gathered, was none too well provided with means to support his own small household. However, he had not failed in the duty, and Julian (his name had been Englished) was still going to school at his uncle's expense. It was by this time understood that, on leaving school, he should come into the shop, and there qualify himself for the business of a chemist.

Had it not been for Julian, the back parlour would have seen but little cheerfulness to-night. Mr. Smales himself was always depressed in

mind and ailing in body. When his hands were not otherwise occupied, he constantly rubbed them together in a nervous manner highly irritating to witness. His pocket-handkerchief generally lay upon his knees, and he had a habit of twisting up the corners which could very well have been dispensed with. His eyes watered very much, and there were but few days in the year when he was not suffering from a more or less distressing influenza. He smiled very seldom, and, when he did, always followed it up with a grievous sigh. Yet in manner he was not querulous or ill-tempered; he always appeared to be doing his best to hold up and be at least moderately cheerful, though the effort resulted in painful failure. Life had proved too much for him; the burden of the recurring daylight was beyond his strength. There was plainly no lack of kindliness in his disposition, and this never failed to come strongly into his countenance as often as he looked at Harriet. His love for the girl was remarkably strong, though every other characteristic seemed so stamped with feebleness. She was his only child. Her mother

had died of consumption early in their married life, and it was his perpetual dread lest he should discover in Harriet a disposition to the same malady.

His fears had but too much stimulus to keep them alive. Harriet had passed through a sickly childhood, and, now that she was growing up, developed a radically feeble constitution. Body and mind were alike unhealthy. Of all the people who came in contact with her, her father alone was blind to her distorted sense of right, her baseless resentments, her malicious pleasures, her depraved intellect. His affection she repaid with mere indifference. At present, the only person she appeared to really like was the servant Sarah, who has already indirectly come into our story. This Sarah was a girl of genuinely bad character, covering a multitude of evil dispositions with the vice of hypocrisy. She had been in the house for nearly two years now, and her influence for evil on Harriet's character could not easily be expressed. Mr. Smales had no sense of this misfortune, and his daughter's motherless condition made him

disposed to encourage the intimacy between her and the servant, in the absence of any better companionship for the girl. He grew little by little to treat Sarah as a sort of housekeeper, and to repose much confidence in her.

Harriet had suffered more from Ida's blow than had at first appeared likely. The wound would not heal well, and she had had several feverish nights. To-day she had eaten more plum-pudding than was good for her, and in consequence suffered from a bilious headache. She still wore bandages about her face, the colour of which was more unwholesome than ever. For her convenience, the couch had been drawn up between the fire and the table, and, reclining here, she every now and then threw out a petulant word in reply to her father's or Julian's well-meant cheerfulness. But for the boy, as I said, the gloomy silence would seldom have been broken. He, however, was full to-night of a favourite subject, and kept up a steady flow of bright narrative. At school he was much engaged just now with the history of Rome, and it was his greatest delight to tell the

listeners at home all the glorious stories which were his latest acquisitions. Through the whole of to-day he had been supplementing his knowledge of famous Romans from a Plutarch which his teacher had lent him. The enthusiasm with which he spoke of these old heroes and their deeds went beyond mere boyish admiration of valour and delight in bloodshed; he seemed to be strongly sensible of the real features of greatness in these men's lives, and invested his stories with a glow of poetical colour which it is to be feared found little appreciation in either of his hearers. He had made himself surprisingly well acquainted with the details of old Roman life; he spoke of the towns as if he knew them; he could describe the habiliments of peace or war with much lively accuracy.

"And I was born in Rome, wasn't I, uncle?" he exclaimed at last. "*I* am a Roman; *Romanus sum!*"

Then he laughed with his wonted bright gleefulness. It was half in jest, but for all that there was a genuine warmth on his cheek, and lustre in his fine eyes.

"Some day I will go to Rome again," he said, "and both of you shall go with me. We shall see the Forum and the Capitol! Sha'n't you shout when you see the Capitol, uncle?"

Poor Smales only smiled sadly and shook his head. It was a long way from Boston Street to Rome; greater still the distance between the boy's mind and that of his uncle.

Sarah took Harriet to bed early. Julian had got hold of his Plutarch again, and read snatches of it aloud every now and then. His uncle paid no heed, was sunk in dull reverie. When they had sat thus for more than an hour, Mr. Smales began to exhibit a wish to talk.

"Put the book away, and draw up to the fire, my boy," he said, with as near an approach to heartiness as he was capable of. "It's Christmas time, and Christmas only comes once a year."

He rubbed his palms together, then began to twist the corners of his handkerchief.

"Well, Julian," he went on, leaning feebly forward to the fire, "a year more school, I suppose, and then—business; what?"

"Yes, uncle."

The boy spoke cheerfully, but yet not in the same natural way as before.

"I wish I could afford to make you something better, my lad; you ought to be something better by rights. And I don't well know what you'll find to do in this stuffy little shop. The business might be better; yes, might be better. You won't have much practice in dispensing, I'm afraid, unless things improve. It is mostly hair-oil,—and the patent medicines. It's a poor look-out for you, Julian."

"Oh, I shall like it, uncle."

There was a silence.

"Harriet isn't quite well yet, is she?" Smales went on, half to himself.

"No, she looked poorly to-night."

"Julian," began the other, but paused, rubbing his hands more nervously than ever.

"Yes, uncle?"

"I wonder what 'ud become of her if I—if I died now? You're growing up, and you're a clever lad; you'll soon be able to shift for yourself. But what'll Harriet do? If only she had her health. And I shall have nothing to leave

either her or you, Julian,—nothing,—nothing! She'll have to get her living somehow. I must think of some easy business for her, I must. She might be a teacher, but her head isn't strong enough, I fear. Julian,—"

"Yes, uncle?"

"You—you are old enough to understand things, my boy," went on his uncle, with quavering voice. "Suppose, after I'm dead and gone, Harriet should want help. She won't make many friends, I fear, and she'll have bad health. Suppose she was in want of any kind,—you'd stand by her, Julian, wouldn't you? You'd be a friend to her,—always?"

"Indeed I would, uncle!" exclaimed the boy, stoutly.

"You promise me that, Julian, this Christmas night?—you promise it?"

"Yes, I promise, uncle. You've always been kind and good to me, and see if I'm not the same to Harriet."

His voice trembled with generous emotion.

"No, I sha'n't see it, my boy," said Smales, shaking his head drearily; "but the promise

will be a comfort to me at the end, a comfort to me. You're a good lad, Julian!"

Silence came upon them again.

The other abode to which we must now turn is in the same neighbourhood. It is one of a row of semi-detached houses standing in gardens, on the south side of South Bank. You enter by a wooden gate in the brick wall which skirts the road. An unshapely little house of grey brick, with unsymmetrical windows in unaccountable positions; above the ground floor only one storey. A long row of wooden steps, protected by a very ugly metal arch, lead up to the front door. Here lived Ida's little friend, Maud Enderby, with her aunt, a maiden lady of perhaps forty-two or three. Miss Theresa Bygrave had inherited the dwelling under strange circumstances. Twenty years ago she had been the promised wife of a young man of much talent but small possessions, who shared this house with a twin brother, the two living alone. But a very few days before that fixed for the marriage, the bridegroom unaccountably

disappeared; and, in the course of a week, his body was taken out of the Thames. The surviving brother shut himself up, apparently overwhelmed with grief, and, after living in solitude for rather more than a year, himself died. He left a will, bequeathing all he possessed to the woman who would have been his brother's wife. The house was let to strangers for a time; after that, became the abode of its owner. The rooms were small and dark; the furniture sparse, old-fashioned, and much worn; there were no ornaments in any of the rooms, with the exception of a few pictures representing the saddest incidents in the life of Christ. On entering the front door you were oppressed by the chill, damp atmosphere, and by a certain unnatural stillness. The stairs were not carpeted, but stained a dark colour; a footfall upon them, however light, echoed strangely as if from empty chambers above. There was no sign of lack of repair; perfect order and cleanliness wherever the eye penetrated; yet the general effect was an unspeakable desolation. Impossible to imagine happy people living here. Rather

one felt as if a corpse lay in the house, and it was the morning of the funeral.

Maud Enderby, on reaching home after her meeting with Ida, entered the front parlour, and sat down in silence near the window, where faint daylight yet glimmered. The room was without fire. Over the mantelpiece hung an engraving of the Crucifixion; on the opposite wall were the Agony in the Garden, and an Entombment; all after good masters. The centre table, a few chairs, and a small sideboard were the sole articles of furniture. The table was spread with a white cloth; upon it were a loaf of bread, a pitcher containing milk, two plates, and two glasses.

Maud sat in the cold room for a quarter of an hour; it became quite dark. Then was heard a soft footstep descending the stairs; the door opened, and a lady came in, bearing a lighted lamp, which she stood upon the table. She was tall, very slender, and with a face which a painter might have used to personify the spiritual life. Its outlines were of severe perfection; its expression a confirmed grief, subdued by, and

made subordinate to, the consciousness of an inward strength which could convert suffering into triumph. As she stood in the doorway, with the lamp held before her face, her lineaments, in their fixed firmness, gleamed as though of ivory; her full eyes looked straight forward, with a sternness which seemed to speak judgment on herself rather than on others. Her garment was black, of the simplest possible form; it fitted tightly at her neck and her wrists, with no trace of ornament; the lower part fell in natural folds, gracefully suited to her stature. Her look turned upon little Maud, as the child rose from the chair; it was scarcely affection that her eyes expressed, rather a grave compassion. Maud took a seat at the table without speaking; her aunt sat down over against her. In perfect silence they partook of the milk and the bread. Miss Bygrave then cleared the table with her own hands, and took the things out of the room. Maud still kept her place. The child's manner was not at all constrained; she was evidently behaving in her wonted way. Her eyes wandered about the room with rather a dreamy gaze,

and, as often as they fell upon her aunt's face, became very serious, though in no degree expressive of fear or even awe.

Miss Bygrave returned, and seated herself near the little girl; then remained thoughtful for some minutes. The breath from their lips was plainly visible on the air. Maud almost shivered now and then, but forced herself to suppress the impulse. Her aunt presently broke the silence, speaking in a low voice, which had nothing of tenderness, but was most impressive in its earnest calm.

"I wish to speak to you before you go up-stairs, Maud; to speak of things which you cannot understand fully, as yet, but which you are old enough to begin to think about."

Maud was surprised. It was the first time that her aunt had ever addressed her in this serious way. She was used to being all but ignored, though never in a manner which made her feel that she was treated unkindly. There was nothing like confidence between them; only in care for her bodily wants did Miss Bygrave fill the place of the mother whose affection the

child had never known. Maud crossed her hands on her lap, and looked up with respectful attention upon her pale sweet little face.

"Do you wonder at all," Miss Bygrave went on, "why we never spend Christmas like your friends do in their homes, with eating and drinking and all sorts of merriment?"

"Yes, aunt, I do."

It was evidently the truth, and given with the simple directness which characterized the child.

"You know what Christmas Day means, Maud?"

"It is the day on which Christ was born."

"And for what purpose did Christ come as a child on earth?"

Maud thought for a moment. She had never had any direct religious teaching; all she knew of these matters was gathered from her regular attendance at church. She replied in a phrase which had rested in her mind, though probably conveying little if any meaning to her.

"He came to make us free from sin."

"And so we should rejoice at His coming. But would it please Him, do you think, to see us

showing our joy by indulging in those very sins from which He came to free us?"

Maud looked with puzzled countenance.

"Is it a sin to like cake and sweet things, aunt?"

The gravity of the question brought a smile to Miss Bygrave's close, strong lips.

"Listen, Maud," she said, "and I will tell you what I mean. For you to like such things is no sin, as long as you are still too young to have it explained to you why you should overcome that liking. As I said, you are now old enough to begin to think of more than a child's foolishness, to ask yourself what is the meaning of the life which has been given you, what duties you must set before yourself as you grow up to be a woman. When once these duties have become clear to you, when you understand what the end of life is and how you should seek to gain it, then many things become sinful which were not so before, and many duties must be performed which previously you were not ready for."

Miss Bygrave spoke with effort, as if she found it difficult to express herself in sufficiently

simple phraseology. Speaking, she did not look at the child; and, when the pause came, her eyes were still fixed absently on the picture above the mantelpiece.

"Keep in mind what I shall tell you," she proceeded, with growing solemnity, "and some day you will better understand its meaning than you can now. The sin which Christ came to free us from was—fondness for the world, enjoyment of what we call pleasure, desire for happiness on earth. He himself came to set us the example of one to whom the world was nothing, who could put aside every joy, and make His life a life of sorrows. Even that was not enough. When the time had come, and He had finished His teaching of the disciples whom He chose, He willingly underwent the most cruel of all deaths, to prove that His teaching had been the truth, and to show us that we must face any most dreadful suffering rather than desert what we believe to be right."

She pointed to the crucified figure, and Maud followed the direction of her hand with awed gaze.

"And this," said Miss Bygrave, "is why I think it wrong to make Christmas a time of merriment. In the true Christian, every enjoyment which comes from the body is a sin. If you feel you *like* this or that, it is a sign that you must renounce it, give it up. If you feel fond of life, you must force yourself to hate it; for life is sin. Life is given to us that we may conquer ourselves. We are placed in the midst of sin that we may struggle against its temptations. There is temptation in the very breath you draw, since you feel a dread if it is checked. You must live so as to be ready at any moment to give up your life with gladness, as a burden which it has been appointed you to bear for a time. There is temptation in the love you feel for those around you; it makes you cling to life; you are tempted to grieve if you lose them, whereas death is the greatest blessing in the gift of God. And just because it is so, we must not snatch at it before our time; it would be a sin to kill ourselves, since that would be to escape from the tasks set us. Many pleasures would seem to be innocent, but even these it is

better to renounce, since for that purpose does every pleasure exist. I speak of the pleasures of the world. One joy there is which we may and must pursue, the joy of sacrifice. The more the body suffers, the greater should be the delight of the soul; and the only moment of perfect happiness should be that when the world grows dark around us, and we feel the hand of death upon our hearts."

She was silent, and both sat in the deadly cold room without word or motion. Maud almost held her breath, so strangely was she impressed by the solemn enthusiasm of the dimly understood words. Her aunt kept her eyes upon the suffering Christ, with a gaze which was becoming rapt adoration. The stillness of the house was absolute. Presently it was broken by the sound of a door closing up-stairs, and then by the tread of a person coming down. Maud turned her head and listened; she recognized the step of a lady who for some months had occupied an upper part of the house. She knew her as Mrs. Paul, but very seldom saw her. When the footstep reached the parlour-door and paused

there, and when the door was opened, Miss Bygrave herself turned her head and rose.

There entered a lady dressed for walking. Her age was scarcely thirty, and the resemblance between her and Miss Bygrave was clear enough to proclaim some close relationship. But her face spoke a very different character; it was a good type degraded by a strong element of frivolity. She was pretty, a word which certainly could at no time have applied to Miss Bygrave's face; there was something, too, of coquetry in her attire, though she was plainly dressed. But, as she came forward into the room, it was the expression of her countenance which held attention. Her eyes wandered hither and thither with strange light; she smiled in an absent way, and nodded her head to Miss Bygrave, whilst with one hand she buttoned a glove upon the other.

"Ta-ta, Theresa," she said. "I sha'n't be long. I have ordered dinner for six, and the carriage for the opera at half-past seven. I have to make one or two purchases before dinner. Ta-ta!"

Miss Bygrave's face changed to a grave alarm. She stepped quickly towards the speaker.

"Come up-stairs with me first, Emily," she said, in a low voice, which almost trembled. "I want to ask you to look at—"

"No, no," broke in the other, shaking her head and laughing in a childish way, "I really haven't time. Paul is waiting for me at Hargrove's; I shall be late. Why, there's his knock, upon my word!"

There had come a double knock at the front door. The sudden noise it made went with endless echoes through the house and startled the listeners. Miss Bygrave endeavoured to hold back the other woman, but it was in vain; for Mrs. Paul had darted out into the passage, and gone to open to the visitor. Maud stood alone in the room, wondering. She heard the front door open, and then—then a fearful shriek which rang through the still air with blood-thrilling horror. There was a confusion of voices, stumbling feet, and Miss Bygrave came back into the parlour, ghostly in countenance,

followed by a man who bore in his arms the insensible form of Mrs. Paul.

"Go up-stairs at once," said Miss Bygrave to the child, sternly.

Maud obeyed. As she left the room, she caught the eyes of the strange man, fixed upon her with such an intensity of anguish that she fled in terror.

CHAPTER V.

POSSIBILITIES.

WHEN Mr. Abraham Woodstock was left alone, on Ida Starr's departure, he did what was a very rare thing for him to do, took out a pocket-book and noted an address. As a rule his tenacious memory relieved him from this necessity. The reason for his making a note of the address which had stood at the head of Lotty's letter, now hopelessly in fragments, was probably this. Surprise at the receipt of the letter and at its contents had prevented him from doing more than half-unconsciously glance at the superscription; only when the sheet was torn did he remember his neglect. But his mind had preserved the impression which it so passingly received; a moment's reflection and he had recovered the address. It was a very little

thing, but the thought that he might have had to question the child, and so appear interested in her, gave him some annoyance. He used his note-book as a sort of self-rebuke.

Mr. Woodstock did not get to his letter-writing, thus twice this morning interrupted. He spent a couple of hours in unwonted absence of mind. A portion of that time he sat before the fire, his body squared and slightly leaning forward, knees parted and a hand on each. The chair had a round back to it, but it was one of his habits, indicative of the physical vigour of the man, very seldom to seek any support of this kind; as a rule he would sit bolt upright, indebted to nothing but his own dorsal structure. He turned his eyes first to the right for a while, then to the left, though looking at nothing in particular; his big lips worked a little occasionally; his brows moved up and down. The self-communing did not apparently result in any definite purpose, and during the latter part of the day his ordinary routine suffered no alteration.

Nor throughout the days which immediately

followed. For all that, a close observer could have testified to an occasional absence of mind not altogether natural; perhaps, too, the entrance of any one into the office caused him to look up with an interest he was not wont to display in so ordinary an event. And could one have seen into his mind during the night-watches, it would probably have been found running on things quite beyond the circles alike of his daily business and his accustomed hobbies. Christmas Day passed over, and the beginning of the new year drew nigh. And, one morning, as Mr. Woodstock was glancing up and down the pages of a ledger, a telegram was delivered to him. It was from the house-surgeon of a hospital in the north-west of London. "Your daughter is dying, and wishes to see you. Please come at once."

Lotty's ailment had declared itself as pneumonia. She was frequently delirious, and the substance of her talk at such times led the attendant Sister to ask her, when reason returned, whether she did not wish any relative

to be sent for. Lotty was frightened, but, as long as she was told that there was still hope of recovery, declined to mention any name. The stubborn independence which had supported her through these long years asserted itself again, as a reaction after her fruitless appeal; at moments she felt that she could die with her lips closed, and let what might happen to her child. But when she at length read upon the faces of those about her that her fate hung in the balance, and when she saw the face of little Ida, come there she knew not how, looking upon her from the bedside, then her purpose yielded, and in a whisper she told her father's address, and begged that he might be apprised of her state.

Abraham Woodstock arrived at the hospital, but to no purpose. Lotty had lost her consciousness. He waited for some hours; there was no return of sensibility. When it had been long dark, and he had withdrawn from the ward for a little, he was all at once hastily summoned back. He stood by the bedside, his hands behind his back, his face set in a hard gaze

upon the pale features on the pillow. Opposite to him stood the medical man, and a screen placed around the bed shut them off from the rest of the ward. All at once Lotty's eyes opened. It seemed as though she recognized her father, for a look of surprise came to her countenance. Then there was a gasping for breath, a struggle, and the eyes saw no more, for all their staring.

Mr. Woodstock left the hospital. At the first public-house he reached he entered and drank a glass of hot Scotch whisky. The barman had forgotten the piece of lemon, and was rewarded with an oath considerably stronger than the occasion seemed to warrant. Our friend looked at his watch as he walked on, and, having reached the crossing of certain roads, paused. His eyes were turned downwards; he did not seem dubious of his way, so much as in hesitation as to a choice of directions. He took a few steps hither, then back; began to wend thither, and again turned. When he at length decided, his road brought him to Milton Street, and up to the door on which stood the name of Mrs. Ledward.

He rapped sharply, and the landlady herself opened.

"A Mrs. Starr lived here, I believe?" he asked, harshly.

"She does live here, sir, but she's in the orspital at present, I'm sorry to say."

"Is her child at home?"

"She is, sir."

"Let me see her, will you? In some room, if you please."

Mrs. Ledward's squinting eyes took shrewd stock of this gentleman, and, with much politeness, she showed him into her own parlour. Then she summoned Ida from up-stairs, and, the door being closed upon the two, she held her ear as closely as possible to the keyhole.

Ida recognized her visitor with a start, and drew back a little. There was both fear and dislike in her face, fear perhaps predominating.

"You remember coming to see me," said Mr. Woodstock, looking down upon the child, and a trifle askance.

"Yes, sir," was Ida's reply.

"I have just been at the hospital. Your mother is dead."

His voice gave way a little between the first and the last letter of the last word. Perhaps the sound was more to his ear than the thought had been to his mind. Perhaps, also, he felt when it was too late that he ought to have made this announcement with something more of preparation. Ida's eyes were fixed upon his face, and seemed expanding as they gazed; her lips had parted; she was the image of sudden dread. He tried to look away from her, but somehow could not. Then two great tears dropped upon her cheeks, and her mouth began to quiver. She put her hands up to her face, and sobbed as a grown woman might have done.

Mr. Woodstock turned away for a minute, and fingered a china ornament on the mantelpiece. He heard the sobs forcibly checked, and, when there was silence, again faced his grandchild.

"You'll be left all alone now, you see," he said, his voice less hard. "I was a friend of

your mother's, and I'll do what I can for you. You'd better come with me to my house."

Ida looked at him in surprise, tempered with indignation.

"If you were a friend of mother's," she said, "why did you want to take me away from her and never let her see me again?"

"Well, you've nothing to do with that," said Abraham, roughly. "Go and put your things on, and come with me."

"No," replied Ida, firmly. "I don't want to go with you."

"What you want has nothing to do with it. You will do as I tell you."

Abraham felt strangely in this interview. It was as though time were repeating itself, and he was once more at issue with his daughter's childish wilfulness.

Ida did not move.

"Why won't you come?" asked Mr. Woodstock, sharply.

"I don't want to," was Ida's answer.

"Look here, then," said the other, after a brief consideration. "You have the choice, and

you're old enough to see what it means. You can either come with me and be well cared for, or stay here and shift as best you can; now, be sharp and make up your mind."

"I don't wish to go with you, I'll stay here and do my best."

"Very well."

Mr. Woodstock whistled a bar of an air, stepped from the room, and thence out into the streets.

It was not his intention really to go at once. Irritation had made it impossible for him to speak longer with the child; he would walk the length of the street and return to give her one more chance. Distracted in purpose as he had never been in his life before, he reached Marylebone Road; rain was just beginning to fall, and he had no umbrella with him. He stood and looked back. Ida once out of his sight, that impatient tenderness which her face inspired failed before the recollection of her stubbornness. She had matched her will with his, as bad an omen as well could be. What was the child to him, or he to her? He did not feel capable of

trying to make her like him; what good in renewing the old conflicts and upsetting the position of freedom he had attained? Doubtless she inherited a fatal disposition. In his mind lurked the foreknowledge that he might come to be fond of this little outcast, but Woodstock was incapable as yet of understanding that love must and will be its own reward. The rain fell heavier, and at this moment an omnibus came up. He hailed it, saying to himself that he would think the matter over and come back on the morrow. The first part of his purpose he fulfilled; but to Milton Street he never returned.

As soon as he had left the house, Mrs. Ledward bounced into the room where Ida stood.

"You little idjot!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean by refusing a offer like that!—Why, the gentleman's your own father."

"My father!" repeated Ida, in scornful astonishment. "My father died when I was a baby. Mother's told me so often."

"If you believe all your mother told you,—Well, well, you have been a little wooden-head.

What possessed you to behave like that to him?—Where does he live, eh?"

"I don't know."

"You do know. Why, I heard him say you'd been to see him. And what are you going to do, I'd like to know? You don't expect me to keep you, I s'pose. Tell me at once where the gentleman lives, and let me take you there. The idea of your turning against your own father!"

"He's *not* my father!" cried Ida, passionately. "My father is dead; and now mother's dead, and I'm alone."

She turned and went from the room, weeping bitterly.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

ADVERTISING AGENCY.

THE advertisement columns of the newspaper press present us with a ready-made index to the social history of the time. Glance over these sheets of closely-printed matter, and be initiated into the secrets of the most pitiless age the sun ever calendared. See here disclosed, working without disguise, the central motor of our common life. Science, formulating the machine's operation, teaches us to speak politely of the survival of the fittest. The lecture platform resounds its praises in economic eloquence, lauding the principle of universal Competition. Every-day experience, and its concentrated index the advertisement column, put the matter in plainer language, do not care to hide the fact of a brutal fight for livelihood, and sum up in

intelligible terms all the meanness, ruthlessness, anguish, and degradation which such a system implies.

Once and again, in glancing over these columns, you come across an announcement which strikes you with a sense of incongruity, some appeal to the world at large for something not statable in terms of cash or credit, the utterance of one whose needs do not in any way connect themselves with salary. Such an advertisement was to be seen in a morning paper published one day in March 187—, that is to say, some eight years after the events told of in the preceding chapter. It ran thus :—

"WANTED, human companionship. A young man of four-and-twenty wishes to find a congenial associate of about his own age. He is a student of ancient and modern literatures, a free-thinker in religion, a lover of art in all its forms, a hater of conventionalism. Would like to correspond in the first instance. Address O. W.,— News Rooms."

An advertisement which, naturally, might mean

much or little, might be the outcome of an idle whim, or the despairing cry of a hungry heart. It could not be expected to elicit many replies; brought indeed but one. Let us see who it was that wrote that one.

Behind the counter of a chemist's shop in Oxford Street there served, day after day, a young assistant who not seldom had the fortune to draw a second, and more or less furtive, glance from ladies who entered as customers. The young man was, to tell the truth, singularly handsome, and not by any means with that vulgar handsomeness which is fairly common among the better kind of shop-walkers and counter-keepers. He had rather long black hair, which arranged itself in silky ripples about a face of perfectly clear, though rather dark, complexion. His wonted look of thoughtfulness was touched with no suspicion of melancholy, though the fine and delicate lips sometimes gave expression to an unconscious pathos, which made one of the most attractive phases of his countenance. When he smiled, as he frequently did, the effect was very pleasant. He spoke, too,

with that musical intonation which is always more or less suggestive of musical thought. He did not seem by any means ideally adapted to the place he occupied here, yet filled it without suspicion of constraint or uneasiness; there was nothing in him to make one suppose that he had ever been accustomed to a better sphere of life.

His abode was in the house above the shop, and had been for about two years, previously to which he had held a similar position in a more modest establishment. His bed-room, which had to serve him as sitting-room also during his free hours, exhibited indications of a taste not ordinarily found in chemists' assistants. On the walls were several engravings of views in Rome, ancient and modern; and there were two hanging book-cases filled with literature which had evidently known the second-hand stall,—most of the Latin poets, a few Italian books, and some English classics. Not a trace anywhere of the habits and predilections not unfairly associated with the youth of the shop, not even a pipe or a cigar-holder. It was while

sitting alone here one evening, half musing, half engaged in glancing over the advertisements in a paper two days old, that the assistant had been attracted by the insertion just quoted. He read and re-read it, became more thoughtful, sighed slightly. Then he moved to the table and took some note-paper out of a writing-case. Still he seemed to be in doubt, hesitated in pressing a pen against his thumb-nail, was on the point of putting the note-paper away again. Ultimately, however, he sat down to write. He covered four pages with a letter, which he then proceeded deliberately to correct and alter, till he had cut it down by about half. Then came another period of doubt before he decided to make a fair copy. But it was finally made, and the signature at the foot was: Julian Casti.

He went out at once, and put it in the post.

Two days later he received a reply, somewhat longer than his own epistle. The writer was clearly keeping himself in a quite tentative attitude. Still, he wrote something about his own position and his needs. He was a teacher

in a school in South London, living in lodgings, with his evenings mostly unoccupied. His habits, he declared, were Bohemian. Suppose, by way of testing each other's dispositions, they were to interchange views on some book with which both were likely to be acquainted: say, Keats's poems? In conclusion, the "O. W." of the advertisement signed himself Osmond Waymark.

The result was that, a week after, Casti received an invitation to call on Waymark, at the latter's lodgings in Walcot Square, Kennington. He arrived on a Saturday evening, just after eight o'clock. The house he sought proved to be one of very modest appearance; small, apparently not too clean, generally uninviting. But a decent-looking woman opened the door, and said that Mr. Waymark would be found in response to a knock at the first-floor front. The visitor made his way up the dark, narrow staircase, and knocked as bidden. A firm voice summoned him to enter.

From a seat by a table which was placed as near as possible to a very large fire rose a young

man whose age might have been anything between twenty-three and twenty-eight. Most people would have inclined to give him the latter figure. He was rather above the average stature, and, though scarcely of handsome figure, showed fairly well-hung limbs, with a habit of holding himself which suggested considerable toughness of sinews; he moved gracefully, and with head well held up. His attire spoke sedentary habits; would have been decidedly shabby, but for its evident adaptation to easy-chair and fireside. The pure linen and general tone of cleanliness was reassuring; the hand, too, which he extended, was soft, delicate, and finely formed. The head was striking, strongly individual, set solidly on a rather long and shapely neck; a fine forehead, irregular nose, rather prominent jaw-bones, lips just a little sensual, but speaking good-humour and intellectual character. A heavy moustache; else clean-shaved. Eyes dark, keen, very capable of tenderness, but perhaps more often shrewdly discerning or cynically speculative. Marks all over the countenance of dark things endured,

sufferings probably more from within than from without. One felt that the present expression of genial friendliness was unfamiliar to the face, though it by no means failed in pleasantness. The lips had the look of being frequently gnawed in intense thought or strong feeling. In the cheeks no healthy colour, but an extreme sallowness on all the features. Smiling, he showed imperfect teeth. Altogether, a young man upon whom one felt it difficult to pronounce in the earlier stages of acquaintance; whose intimacy but few men would exert themselves to seek; who in all likelihood was chary of exhibiting his true self save when secure of being understood.

Julian Casti was timid with strangers; his eyes fell before the other's look, and he shook hands without speaking. The contrast in mere appearance between the two was very pronounced; both seemed in some degree to be aware of it. Waymark seemed more rugged than in ordinary companionship; the slightly effeminate beauty of Casti, and his diffident, shyly graceful manners, were more noticeable than usual. Waymark inspected his visitor

closely and directly; the latter only ventured upon one or two quick side-glances. Yet the results were, on the whole, mutually satisfactory. They sat down together with ease.

The room was the ordinary parlour and bedroom in one of the poorer kind of lodging-houses as far as mere furniture went, but Julian's eyes had glistened at the sight of two goodly bookcases, reaching from floor to ceiling. There were, too, pictures of other than the lodging-house type; engraved heads of the great in art and science, and a few reproductions in pencil or chalk of known subjects, it might be their possessor's own work. On the table drawn so near to the fire lay traces of literary occupation, sheets of manuscript, open books, and the like. On another table stood a tray, with cups and saucers. A kettle was boiling on the fire.

Waymark made some pleasant inquiries as to his visitor's difficulty or otherwise in discovering Walcot Square, then proceeded to render their conversation easier by offering a cup of coffee, which he himself made on the spot.

"You smoke, I hope?" he asked, reaching some cigars from the mantelpiece.

Julian shook his head, with a smile.

"No? How on earth do you support existence?—At all events, you don't, as the railway-carriage phrase has it, object to smoking?"

"Not at all. I like the scent, but was never tempted to go further."

Waymark filled his pipe, and made himself comfortable in a low cane-bottomed chair, which had stood folded-up against the wall. Talk began to range over very various topics, Waymark leading the way, his visitor only gradually venturing to take the initiative. Theatres were mentioned, but Julian knew little of them; recent books, but with these he had small acquaintance; politics, but in these he had clearly no interest.

"There's a point of contact, at all events," exclaimed Waymark. "I detest the very name of Parliament, and could as soon read Todhunter on Conic Sections as the reports of a debate. Perhaps you're a mathematician?" This with a smile.

"By no means," was the reply. "In fact," Casti went on, "I'm afraid you begin to think my interests are very restricted indeed. My opportunities have been narrow. I left a very ordinary school at fourteen, and what knowledge I have subsequently got has come from my own efforts. I am sure the profit from our intercourse will be entirely on my side. I have the will to enter into many things, however,"—

"Oh," broke in the other, "don't suppose that I am a scholar in any sense of the word, or a man of more than average culture. My own regular education came to an end pretty much at the same age, and only a certain stubbornness has forced me into an intellectual life, if you can call it so. Not much intellect required in my every-day business, at all events. The school in which I teach is a fair type of the middle-class commercial 'academy'; the head-master a nincompoop and charlatan, my fellow-assistants poor creatures, who must live, I suppose,—though one doesn't well understand why. I had always a liking for Greek and Latin, and can make shift to read both in a

way satisfactory to myself, though I dare say it wouldn't go for much with college examiners. Then, as for my scribbling, well, it has scarcely yet passed the amateur stage. It will some day; simply because I've made up my mind that it shall; but as yet I haven't got beyond a couple of weak articles in weak magazines, and I don't exactly feel sure of my way. I rather think we shall approach most nearly in our taste for poetry. I liked much what you had to say about Keats. It decided me that we ought to pursue our adventure."

Julian looked up with a bright smile.

"What did you think at first of my advertisement, eh?" cried Waymark, with a sudden burst of loud laughter. "Queer idea, wasn't it?"

"It came upon me curiously. It was so like a frequent thought of my own actually carried out."

"It was? You have felt that same desperate need of congenial society?"

"I have felt it very strongly indeed. I live so very much alone, and have always done so. Fortunately I am of a very cheerful disposition,

or I might have suffered much. The young fellows whom I see every day haven't much intellectuality, it must be confessed. I used to try to get them under the influence of my own enthusiasms, but they didn't seem to understand me. External things alone they have a mind for, things which either repel me, or are utterly without interest."

"Ha! you understand what that means!" Waymark had risen from his low chair, and stood with his back to the fire. His eyes had got a new life, and he spoke in a strong, emphatic way which suited well with his countenance. "You know what it is to have to do exclusively with fools and brutes, to long unspeakably for a voice from higher spheres, to rave under the vile restraints of Philistine surroundings? Then you can form some notion of the state I was in when I took the step of writing that advertisement; I was, I firmly believe, on the verge of lunacy! For two or three days I had come back home from the school only to pace up and down the room in an indescribable condition. I get often like

that, but this time things seemed reaching a climax. Why, I positively cried with misery, absurd as it may sound. My blood seemed too hot, seemed to be swelling out the veins beyond endurance. As a rule I get over these moods by furious walking about the streets half through the night, but I couldn't even do that. I had no money to go in for dissipation: that often helps me. Read? Write? As soon I could speak mystic tongues! Every book was loathsome to me. My landlady must have overheard something, for she came in and began a conversation about God knows what; I fear I mortally offended her; I could have pitched the poor old woman out of the window! Heavens, how did I get through those nights?"

"And the fit has passed?" inquired Julian, when the other ceased.

"The Lord be praised, yes!" Waymark laughed half-scornfully. "There came an editor's note, accepting a thing that had been going from magazine to magazine for three months. This snatched me up into furious spirits. I rushed out to a theatre, drank more than was good for me,

made a fool of myself in general,—and then received your letter. Good luck never comes singly."

Julian had watched the strange workings of Waymark's face with close interest. When the latter suddenly turned his eyes, as if to see the effect of all his frankness, Casti coloured slightly and looked away, but with a look of friendly sympathy.

"Do I shock you?" asked the other. "Do you think me rather too much of an animal, for all my spiritual longings?"

"Certainly not, I can well understand you, I believe."

The conversation passed to quieter things. Julian seemed afraid of saying too much about his own experiences, but found opportunities of showing his acquaintance with English poetry, which was quite as extensive as that of his new friend, excepting in the case of a few writers of the day, whom he had not been able to procure. He had taught himself Italian, too, and had read considerably in that language. He explained that his father was an Italian, but had died when he himself was still an infant.

"You have been in Italy?" asked Waymark, with interest.

A strange look came over Julian's features, a look at once bright and melancholy; his fine eyes gleamed very much as we saw them gleam eight years ago, in the back-parlour in Boston Street, when he was telling the tales from Plutarch, though the tender poetry of his emotions had clearly deepened, and the unreflecting school-boy spirit had undergone a ripening change.

"Never," he said, in a low voice charged with feeling, "since I was three years old.—You will think it strange, but I don't so much long for the modern Italy, for the beautiful scenery and climate, not even for the Italy of Raphael, or of Dante. I think most of classical Italy. I am no scholar, but I love the Latin writers, and can forget myself for hours, working through Livy or Tacitus. I want to see the ruins of Rome; I want to see the Tiber, the Clitumnus, the Aufidus, the Alban Hills, Lake Trasimenus, —a thousand places! It is strange how those old times have taken hold upon me. The mere

names in Roman history make my blood warm. —And there is so little chance that I shall ever be able to go there ; so little chance."

Waymark had watched the glowing face with some surprise.

"Why, this is famous!" he exclaimed. "We shall suit each other splendidly. Who knows? We may see Italy together, in days when we shall look back upon these times of miserable struggle with a generous contempt. By the bye, have you ever written verses?"

Julian reddened, like a girl.

"I have tried to," he said.

"And do still?"

"Sometimes."

"I thought as much. Some day you shall let me hear them ; won't you? And I will read you some of my own. But mine are in the savage vein, a mere railing against the universe, altogether too furious to be anything like poetry ; I know that well enough. I have long since made up my mind to stick to prose ; it is the true medium for a polemical egotist. I want to find some new form of satire ; I feel capabilities

that way which shall by no means rust unused. It has pleased Heaven to give me a plentifully splenetic disposition, and some day or other I shall find the tongue."

It was midnight before Julian rose to leave, and he was surprised when he discovered how time had flown. Waymark insisted on his guest's having some supper before setting out on his walk home; he brought out of a cupboard a tin of Australian mutton, which, with bread and pickles, afforded a very tolerable meal after four hours' talk. They then left the house together, and Waymark accompanied his friend as far as Westminster Bridge.

"It's too bad to have brought you so far at this hour," said Julian, as they parted.

"Oh, it is my hour for walking," was the reply. "London streets at night are my element. Depend upon it, Rome was poor in comparison!"

He went off laughing, and waving his hand.

CHAPTER II.

BETWEEN OLD AND NEW.

JULIAN CASTI'S uncle had been three years dead. It was well for him that he lived no longer; his business had continued to dwindle, and the last months of the poor man's life were embittered by the prospect of inevitable bankruptcy. He died of an overdose of some opiate, which the anguish of sleeplessness brought him into the habit of taking. Suicide it might have been, yet that was scarcely probable; he was too anxious on his daughter's account to abandon her in this way, for certainly his death could be nothing to her profit. Julian was then already eighteen, and quickly succeeded in getting a situation. Harriet Smales left London, and went to live with her sole relative, except Julian, an aunt who kept a stationer's shop in

Colchester. She was taught the business, and assisted her aunt for more than two years, when, growing tired of the life of a country town, she returned to London, and succeeded in getting a place at a stationer's in Gray's Inn Road. This was six months ago. Having thus established herself, she wrote to Julian, and told him where she was.

Julian never forgot the promise he had made to his uncle that Christmas night, eight years ago, when he was a lad of thirteen. Harriet he had always regarded as his sister, and never yet had he failed in brotherly duty to her. When the girl left Colchester, she was on rather bad terms with her aunt, and the latter wrote to Julian, saying that she had no idea of Harriet's purposes in going to London, but that it was certainly advisable that some friend should be at hand, if possible, to give her advice; though advice (she went on to say) was seldom acceptable to Harriet. This letter alarmed Julian, as it was the first he had heard of Harriet's new step; the letter from herself at the end of a week's time greatly relieved him, and he went

off as soon as possible to see her. He found her living in the house where she was engaged, apparently with decent people, and moderately contented; more than this could never be said of the girl. Since then, he had seen her at least once every week. Sometimes he visited her at the shop; when the weather was fine, they spent the Sunday afternoon in walking together. Harriet's health seemed to have improved since her return to town. Previously, as in her childhood, she had always been more or less ailing. From both father and mother she had inherited an unhealthy body; there was a scrofulous tendency in her constitution, and the slightest casual ill-health, a cold or any trifling accident, always threatened her with serious results. She was of mind corresponding to her body; restless, self-willed, discontented, sour-tempered, querulous. She certainly used no special pains to hide these faults from Julian, perhaps was not herself sufficiently conscious of them, but the young man did not seem to be repelled by her imperfections; he invariably treated her with gentle forbearance, pitied her

sufferings, did many a graceful little kindness in hope of pleasing her.

The first interview between Julian and Waymark was followed by a second a few days after, when it was agreed that they should spend each Sunday evening together in Kennington; Julian had no room in which he could well receive visitors. The next Sunday proved fine; Julian planned to take Harriet for a walk in the afternoon, then, after accompanying her home, to proceed himself to Walcot Square. As was usual on these occasions, he was to meet his cousin at the Holborn end of Gray's Inn Road, and, as also was very much the rule, Harriet came some twenty minutes late. Julian was himself always scrupulously punctual, and waiting irritated him not a little, but he never allowed himself to show his annoyance. There was always the same kind smile on his handsome face, and the pressure of his hand was warm.

Harriet Smales was about a year younger than her cousin. Her dress showed moderately good taste, with the usual fault of a desire to imitate an elegance which she could not in reality afford.

She wore a black jacket, fur-trimmed, over a light grey dress; her black straw hat had a few flowers in front. Her figure was good and her movements graceful; she was nearly as tall as Julian. Her face, however, could not be called attractive; it was hollow and of a sickly hue, even the lips scarcely red. Grey eyes, beneath which were dark circles, looked about with a quick, suspicious glance; the eyebrows made almost a straight line. The nose was of a coarse type, the lips heavy and indicative of ill-temper. The disagreeable effect produced by these lineaments was increased by the presence of a long scar over her right temple; she evidently did her best to conceal it by letting her hair come forward very much on each side, an arrangement in itself unsuited to her countenance. A connoisseur of women could have found much food for speculation in these commonplace features, probably with the result of feeling thankful that his lot was in no way connected with their possessor.

"I think I'm going to leave my place," was her first remark to-day, as they turned to walk

westward. She spoke in a dogged way with which Julian was familiar enough, holding her eyes down, and, as she walked, swinging her arms impatiently.

"I hope not," said her cousin, looking at her anxiously. "What has happened?"

"Oh, I don't know; it's always the same; people treat you as if you was so much dirt. I haven't been accustomed to it, and I don't see why I should begin now. I can soon enough get a new shop."

"Has Mrs. Ogle been unkind to you?"

"Oh, I don't know, and I don't much care. You're expected to slave just the same, day after day, whether you're feeling well or not."

This indirect and querulous mode of making known her grievances was characteristic of the girl. Julian bore with it very patiently.

"Haven't you been feeling well?" he asked, with the same kindness.

"Well, no, I haven't. My head fairly splits now, and this sun isn't likely to make it any better."

"Let us cross to the shady side."

"'Twon't make any difference; I can't run to get out of the way of horses."

Julian was silent for a little.

"Why didn't you write to me in the week?" she asked, presently. "I'm sure it would be a relief to hear from somebody sometimes. It's like a year from one Sunday to another."

"Did I promise to write? I really didn't remember having done so; I'm very sorry. I might have told you about a new friend I've got."

Harriet looked sharply into his face. Julian had made no mention of Waymark on the preceding Sunday; it had been a rainy day, and they had only spent a few minutes together in the parlour which Mrs. Ogle, the keeper of the shop, allowed them to use on these occasions.

"What sort of a friend?" the girl inquired, rather sourly.

"A very pleasant fellow, rather older than myself; I made his acquaintance by chance."

Julian avoided reference to the real circumstances. He knew well the difficulty of making Harriet understand them.

"We are going to see each other every Sunday," he went on.

"Then I suppose you'll give up coming for me?"

"Oh no, not at all. I shall see him at night always, after I have left you."

"Where does he live?"

"Rather far off; in Kennington."

"What is he?"

"A teacher in a school. I hope to get good from being with him; we're going to read together, and so on. I wish you could find some pleasant companion of the same kind, Harriet; you wouldn't feel so lonely."

"I dare say I'm better off without anybody. I shouldn't suit them. It's very few people I do suit, or else people don't suit me, one or the other. What's his name, your new friend's?"

"Waymark."

"And he lives in Kennington? Whereabouts?"

"In Walcot Square. I don't think you know that part, do you?"

"What number?"

Julian looked at her with some surprise. He found her eyes fixed with penetrating observation upon his face. He mentioned the number, and she evidently made a mental note of it. She was silent for some minutes.

"I suppose you'll go out at nights with him?" was her next remark.

"It is scarcely likely. Where should we go to?"

"Oh, I don't know, and I don't suppose it matters much, to me."

"You seem vexed at this, Harriet. I'm very sorry. Really, it's the first friend I've ever had, whose society could be of profit to me. I've often felt the need of some such companionship."

"I'm nobody?" she said, with a laugh, the first to-day.

Julian's face registered very perfectly the many subtle phases of thought and emotion which succeeded each other in his mind. This last remark distressed him for a moment; he could not bear to hurt another's feelings.

"Of course I meant male friend," he said, quickly. "You are my sister."

"No, I'm not," was the reply; and, as she spoke, Harriet glanced sideways at him in a particularly unpleasant manner. She herself meant it to be pleasant.

"Oh yes, you are, Harriet," he insisted, good-humouredly. "We've been brother and sister ever since we can remember, haven't we?"

"But we aren't really, for all that," said the girl, looking away. "Well, now you've got somebody else to take you up, I know very well I shall see less of you. You'll be making excuses to get out of the rides when the summer comes again."

"Pray don't say or think anything of the kind, Harriet," urged Julian, with feeling. "I should not think of letting anything put a stop to our picnics. It will soon be getting warm enough to think of the river, won't it? And then, if you would like it, there is no reason why my friend shouldn't come with us, sometimes."

"Oh, nonsense! Why, you'd be ashamed to let him know me."

"Ashamed! How can you possibly think so? But you don't mean it; you are joking."

"I'm sure I'm not. I should make mistakes in talking, and all sorts of things. You don't think much of me, as it is, and that would make you like me worse still."

She tossed her head nervously, and swung her arms with the awkward restlessness which always denoted some strong feeling in her.

"Come, Harriet, this is too bad," Julian exclaimed, smiling. "Why, I shall have to quarrel with you, to prove that we're good friends."

"I wish you *would* quarrel with me sometimes," said the girl, laughing in a forced way. "You take all my bad-temper always just in the same quiet way. I'd far rather you fell out with me. It's treating me too like a child, as if it didn't matter how I went on, and I wasn't anything to you."

Of late, Harriet had been getting much into the habit of this ambiguous kind of remark, when in her cousin's company. Julian noticed it, and it made him a trifle uneasy. He

attributed it, however, to the girl's strangely irritable disposition, and never failed to meet such outbreaks with increased warmth and kindness of tone. To-day, Harriet's vagaries seemed to affect him somewhat unusually. He became silent at times, and then tried to laugh away the unpleasantness, but the laughter was not exactly spontaneous. At length he brought back the conversation to the point from which it had started, and asked if she had any serious intention of leaving Mrs. Ogle.

"I'm tired of being ordered about by people!" Harriet exclaimed. "I know I sha'n't put up with it much longer. I only wish I'd a few pounds to start a shop for myself."

"I heartily wish I had the money to give you," was Julian's reply.

"Don't you save anything at all?" asked his cousin, with affected indifference.

"A little; very little. At all events I think we shall be able to have our week at the seaside when the time comes. Have you thought where you'd like to go to?"

"No; I haven't thought anything about it.

What time shall you get back home to-night?"

"Rather late, I dare say. We sit talking and forget the time. It may be after twelve o'clock."

Harriet became silent again. They reached Hyde Park, and joined the crowds of people going in all directions about the walks. Harriet had always a number of ill-natured comments to make on the dress and general appearance of people they passed. Julian smiled, but with no genuine pleasure. As always, he did his best to lead the girl's thoughts away from their incessant object, herself. He tried to talk of things rather outside and above the every-day interests of life, but in these interests Harriet was absorbed. He had lent her books from time to time, and tried to get her to talk of them; but it was too clear that she had not succeeded in understanding what she read, if indeed it were true that she had tried to read the books at all. On the whole, it was not a little admirable, Julian's weekly self-sacrifice to an idea of duty. He could not say that he disliked his cousin; his compassionate nature often made

him feel a pity for her which was something like affection; but he was under no delusion about her grievous ill-qualities, and they often occasioned him acute suffering. On a fine afternoon such as this, Julian would gladly have sought some quiet spot, and lost himself in musings over all beautiful things; but he gave up this without a sigh. After all, he was conscious that Harriet did feel a certain gratitude for his companionship, and that was quite enough to make the burden a light one.

They were back again at the end of Gray's Inn Road by half-past four.

"Well, I won't keep you," said Harriet, with the sour smile. "I know you're in a hurry to be off. Are you going to walk?"

"Yes; I can do it in about an hour."

The girl turned away without further leave-taking, and Julian walked southwards with a troubled face.

Waymark expected him to tea. At this, their third meeting, the two were already on very easy terms. Waymark did the greater share of the talking, for Julian was naturally of fewer

words; from the beginning it was clear that the elder of the friends would have the initiative in most things. Waymark unconsciously displayed something of that egotism which is inseparable from force of character, and to the other this was far from disagreeable; Julian liked the novel sensation of having a strong nature to rely upon. Already he was being led by his natural tendency to hero-worship into a fervid admiration for his friend. He listened to every word with eager attention, and entirely lost himself in the charm of Waymark's individuality.

"What have you been doing with yourself this fine day?" Waymark asked, as they sat down to table.

"I always spend Sunday afternoon with a cousin of mine," replied Julian, with the unhesitating frankness which was natural to him.

"Male or female?"

"Female." There was a touch of colour on his face as he met the other's eye, and he continued rather quickly. "We lived together always as children, and were only separated at

my uncle's death, three years ago. She is engaged at a stationer's shop."

Do you know why Waymark cast his eyes down for a moment? It sounded strange to him, the perfect openness with which Julian always referred to his own humble position and that of those connected with him. Waymark felt that he would not have been capable of this himself. Was it a snobbish characteristic? Possibly.

"Had you rather keep Sunday night free?" he asked, returning to the previous thought.

"Not at all. I always see my cousin home by tea-time."

The silence which ensued was a trifle awkward. Waymark speedily broke it by talk of other things. Tea over, they took seats by the fire. Julian could not be induced to make a beginning of smoking, a circumstance which Waymark professed to find deplorable.

"What is a fellow to do to get cash?" Waymark exclaimed, when his pipe was well alight. "I'm growing sick of this hand-to-mouth existence. Now if one had a bare competency,

say two hundred and fifty a year, what glorious possibilities would open out. The vulgar saying has it that 'time is money'; like most vulgar sayings putting the thing just the wrong way about. 'Money is time', I prefer to say; it means leisure, and all that follows therefrom. Why don't you write a poem on Money, Casti? I almost feel capable of it myself. What can claim precedence, in all this world, over hard cash? It is the fruitful soil wherein is nourished the root of the tree of life; it is the vivifying principle of human activity. Upon it luxuriate art, letters, science; rob them of its sustenance, and they droop like withering leaves. Money means virtue; the lack of it is vice. The devil loves no lurking-place like an empty purse. Give me a thousand pounds to-morrow, and I become the most virtuous man in England. Why? Because I shall satisfy all my instincts freely, openly, with no petty makeshifts and vile hypocrisies, which alone are the constituents of vicious habit. To scorn and revile wealth is the mere resource of splenetic poverty. What cannot be purchased with coin of the realm?

First and foremost, freedom. The moneyed man is the sole king; the herds of the penniless are but as slaves before his footstool. He breathes with a sense of proprietorship in the whole globe-enveloping atmosphere; for is it not in his power to inhale it wheresoever he pleases? He puts his hand in his pocket, and bids with security for every joy of body and mind; even death he faces with the comforting consciousness that his defeat will only coincide with that of human science. He buys culture, he buys peace of mind, he buys love.—You think not? I don't use the word cynically, but in very virtuous earnest. Make me a millionnaire, and I will purchase the passionate devotion of any free-hearted woman the world contains!"

Waymark's pipe had gone out; he re-lit it, with the half-mocking smile which always followed upon any more vehement utterance.

"That I am poor," he went on presently, "is the result of my own pigheadedness. My father was a stock-broker, in anything but flourishing circumstances. He went in for some cursed foreign loan or other,—I know nothing of such

things,—and ruined himself completely. He had to take a subordinate position, and died in it. I was about seventeen then, and found myself alone in the world. A friend of my father's, also a city man, Woodstock by name, was left my guardian. He wanted me to begin a business career, and, like a fool, I wouldn't hear of it. Mr. Woodstock and I quarrelled; he showed himself worthy of his name, and told me plainly that, if I didn't choose to take his advice, I must shift for myself. That I professed myself perfectly ready to do; I was bent on an intellectual life, forsooth; couldn't see that the natural order of things was to make money first and be intellectual afterwards. So, lad as I was, I got a place as a teacher, and that's been my business ever since. When I was one-and-twenty, Woodstock cleared up accounts with me, with the result that I found myself possessed of three hundred and ninety-two pounds, some shillings, some pence, and, I believe, a halfpenny, the present value of some invested cash which my father had left behind him. What did I do with it? Ye gods! I *lived;* for the space of

some six months positively *lived!* The wonder was I didn't die. I went in for the wildest dissipation, gave up all show of work, cried ho for 'wine and women, mirth and laughter'! The 'sermons and soda-water' naturally came in due course. When I look back on that period, I can scarcely believe that it really formed a part of my life; it is like a wild dream. You put me down for a lunatic? Do you know, my dear fellow, that I in no way regret it all, would go through it again under the same circumstances? It made me at home in the world, it opened to me the secrets of life, it taught me to read the characters of men and, yet more, of women; it will help me to make my fortune yet."

"And when the money was done?" asked Julian.

"What think you? Did I hang about the old haunts, in idle misery and regret? Did I find myself incapacitated for any exertion? No; I had a day of unspeakable torture, and, on the day after that, at once made application to a scholastic agency for a place. I got one, in

a school in Sussex, at the sea-side. What a queer state of mind it was, that in which I fell to teaching once more! I used to astonish my pupils by every now and then bursting into a laugh in the middle of class. The laugh was excited by the incongruity between my inner man and the position I was occupying. Suppose the head-master could have divined the thoughts which corresponded within me to the lip-reciting of *Amo, amas, amat!*"

Waymark threw himself back and laughed loudly. He looked keenly at Julian, strummed a little with his fingers, on the arm of the chair, and resumed:

"I was soon back again in London, the only place under the sun where life is tolerable for more than a week at a time. Then began a new phase. I interested myself in religion and philosophy; I became an aggressive disciple of free-thought, as it is called. Radicalism of every kind broke out in me, like an ailment. I bought cheap free-thought literature; to one or two papers of the kind I even contributed. I keep these effusions carefully locked up, for salutary

self-humiliation at some future day, when I shall have grown conceited. Nay, I went further. I delivered lectures at working-men's clubs, lectures with violent titles. One, I remember, was called 'The Gospel of Rationalism.' And I was enthusiastic in the cause, with an enthusiasm such as I shall never experience again. Can I imagine myself writing and speaking such things now-a-days? Scarcely: yet the spirit remains, it is only the manifestations which have changed. I am by nature combative; I feel the need of attacking the cherished prejudices of society; I have a joy in outraging what are called the proprieties. And I wait for my opportunity, which has yet to come."

"How commonplace my life has been, in comparison," said Julian, after an interval of thoughtfulness. "I have experienced strong emotions, but they have never found outward expression. I have followed the path which circumstances made for me, and suppose I shall always do so. My life till now has not been unhappy, for all that my ordinary mood is one of longing for impossibilities. Mere dwelling

on beauty in the imagination seems to suffice to keep me cheerful. You must regard me as a child, no doubt. And indeed I know as little of the world as one of my age could do. I fear I am absorbed in myself; not even temptations have been strong enough to carry me away."

"Your nature, I believe, is singularly pure, and therefore very happy. *I* am what Browning somewhere calls a 'beast with a speckled hide,' and happiness, I take it, I shall never know."

Even Julian could begin to see that his friend took something of a pleasure in showing and dwelling upon the worst side of his own character.

"You will be happy," he said, "when you once find your true work, and feel that you are doing it well."

"But the motives, the motives!—Never mind, I've talked enough of myself for one sitting. Don't think I've told you everything. Plenty more confessions to come, when time and place shall serve. Little by little you will get to know me, and by then will most likely have had enough of me."

"That is not at all likely; rather the opposite."

When they left the house together, shortly after eleven, Julian's eye fell upon the dark figure of a girl, standing by a gas-lamp on the opposite side of the way. The figure held his gaze. Waymark moved on, and he had to follow, but still looked back. The girl had a veil half down upon her face; she was gazing after the two. She moved, and the resemblance to Harriet was so striking that Julian again stopped. As he did so, the figure turned away, and walked in the opposite direction, till it was lost in the darkness.

Julian went on, and for a time was very silent.

CHAPTER III.

ACADEMICAL.

THE school in which Osmond Waymark taught no longer possesses a local habitation and a name. No great number of years ago its numerous advantages were prominently put forward at certain seasons in the most suitable advertising quarters, presumably with results satisfactory, for the time being at all events, to the learned gentleman at the head of the establishment. It's designation was The Academy, neither more nor less. It was situated, so one learned from the veracious announcements in question, in "a pleasant suburb of southern London" (North Brixton, to wit); had its "spacious playground and gymnasium" (the former a tolerable back-yard, the latter a disused coach-house); and, as to educational features,

offered, at the choice of parents and guardians, either the solid foundation desirable for those youths predestined to a commercial career, or the more liberal training adapted to minds wherein was discernible a professional bias. A member of Parliament, a Q.C., three "directors," a member of the Stock Exchange, and four clergymen, were prepared to testify to the sterling character of The Academy; in addition to which information, you gathered from the prospectus that not a few lights of the Civil Service, and no inconsiderable number of scientific and literary *sommités*, were directly indebted for their worldly success to principles early instilled into their minds at the establishment in North Brixton. Anything further in the way of information was to be obtained by applying to the head-master, Dr. Marcus Tootle.

At present the number of resident pupils was something under forty. The marvel was how so many could be accommodated in so small a house. Two fair-sized bedrooms, and a garret in which the servants could not be persuaded to sleep, served as dormitories for the whole

school; the younger children sleeping two together. On the ground-floor was the main school-room, the dining-room, and a smaller class-room; the last-mentioned serving also as the retreat of the two resident masters when work-hours were over. On the storey above was a room usually occupied by Mrs. Tootle and her family, but which, as we shall presently see, was also used for teaching purposes at times. Below-stairs was a spacious cellar which had to do duty at once as box-room and lavatory, the boys descending thither each morning at a certain stage in their dressing, and going through such ablutions as they saw fit in rows of zinc basins, soap being generally at a premium and water not obtainable at any time in anything but restricted quantity.

Waymark, as we know, did not reside on the premises. For a stipulated sum of thirteen pounds per quarter he taught daily from nine till five, with an interval of an hour and a half at dinner-time, when he walked home to Walcot Square for such meal as the state of his exchequer would allow. Waymark occupied a

prominent place in Dr. Tootle's prospectus. As Osmond Waymark, B.A., — the degree was a *bonâ fide* one, of London University,—he filled the position of Senior Classical Master; anonymously he figured as a teacher of drawing and lecturer on experimental chemistry. The other two masters, resident, were Mr. O'Gree and Herr Egger; the former, teacher of mathematics, assistant classical master, and professor of gymnastics; the latter, teacher of foreign languages, of music, and of dancing. Dr. Tootle took upon himself the English branches, and, of course, the arduous duty of general superintendence. He was a very tall, thin, cadaverous, bald-headed man. Somehow or other he had the reputation of having, at an earlier stage in his career, grievously over-exerted his brain in literary labour; parents were found, on the whole, ready to accept this fact as an incontestable proof of the Doctor's fitness to fill his present office, though it resulted in entire weeks of retreat from the school-room under the excuse of fearful headaches. The only known product of the literary toil which had had such

sad results was a very small English Grammar, of course used in the school, and always referred to by the Doctor as "my little compendium." This phrase had not unnaturally become corrupted on the lips of the Doctor's pupils, among whom he was spoken of as "Old Pendulum," or, still more enigmatically, as "Pendy."

One evening, about the time we speak of, Waymark sought refuge from the loneliness of his room in a visit to his colleagues at The Academy. Once a week, as a rule, he was in the habit of doing this, and was always received with a hearty welcome in what was called the Masters' Room. This retreat was not remarkable for cosiness, even when a fire burnt in the grate and the world of school was for the time shut out. The floor was uncarpeted, the walls illustrated only with a few maps and diagrams. The whole space above the mantelpiece was occupied by a huge slate, let into the wall, and used ordinarily for mathematical demonstration. There was a piano, whereon Herr Egger gave his music lessons. In the centre of the floor a long table, much hacked

round the edges by schoolboys' knives; other furniture, three very ricketty Windsor chairs, and two long forms. Few rooms in existence could have excelled this one for draughts; at all times there came beneath the door a current of wind which pierced the legs like a knife; impossible to leave loose papers anywhere with a chance of finding them in the same place two minutes after.

When Waymark entered this evening, he found his colleagues seated together in silence. Let me try to describe these gentlemen. Mr. Philip O'Gree—"fill-up" was his own habitual pronunciation of the name,—was a decidedly small man; his appearance would have been worse than insignificant, but for the expression of irresistible good-humour and geniality which possessed his most irregular features. He was red-headed, and had large red whiskers,—red hardly suffices to depict their violent tone. His general appearance I might describe as shabby-genteel, but that I fear it would be a misuse of the second adjective; in short, his clothes had presumably once been such as gentle-

men wear, but at present he might very profitably have exchanged them for good honest corduroys, so shockingly had they suffered at the hands of time and the tailor. Apparently Mr. O'Gree did not labour under any consciousness of this fact; he bore himself with dignity, made the very most of his inches, and on the pavement used his little feet as though engaged in a minuet.

Herr Egger was a gentleman of very different exterior. Tall, thick, ungainly, with a very heavy, stupid face, coarse hands, outrageous lower extremities. A mass of coal-black hair seemed to weigh down his head. His attire was un-English, and, one might suspect, had been manufactured in some lonely cottage away in the remote Swiss valley which had till lately been the poor fellow's home. Dr. Tootle never kept his foreign masters long. His plan was to get hold, by means of the Agencies, of some foreigner without means and ignorant of English, who would come and teach French or German in return for mere board and lodging; when the man had learnt a little English, and was

in a position to demand a salary, he was dismissed, and a new professor obtained. Egger had lately, under the influence of some desperate delusion, come to our hospitable clime in search of his fortune Of languages he could not be said to know any; his French and his German were of barbarisms all compact; English as yet he could only discourse in a most primitive manner. He must have been the most unhappy man in all London. Finding himself face to face with large classes of youngsters accustomed to no kind of discipline, in whom every word he uttered merely excited outrageous mirth, he was hourly brought to the very verge of despair. Constitutionally he was lachrymose; tears came from him freely when distress had reached a climax, and the contrast between his unwieldy form and this weakness of demeanour supplied inexhaustible occasion for mirth throughout the school. At times he lost his temper in class-time, and raved in the most absurd fashion; but, unfortunately, was far too good-hearted to inflict the least personal injury on his worst foe. His hours of freedom were

spent in abysmal brooding. His attitude at present, when Waymark entered, was characteristic. He had planted one of the ricketty Windsor chairs in a corner of the room, had tilted it backwards till he rested against the wall, his long legs sprawling dreadfully in front, and sat thus with half an enormous yellow handkerchief crammed into his mouth, whilst his eyes distilled most pathetic fluid. Thus would he remain for hours, till blessed bed-time came, to give him, let us hope, a brief interval of unconsciousness.

Waymark entered in good spirits. At the sight of him, Mr. O'Gree started from the fire-side, snatched up the poker, brandished it wildly about his head, and, with face reddening with an indignation which made him look more irresistibly comical than ever, burst into vehement exclamations.

"Ha!—ha!—you've come in time, sir; you've come in time to hear my resolution. I can't stand ut any longer; I won't stand ut a day longer! Mr. Waymark, you're a witness of the outrageous way in which I'm treated in this

academy,—the way in which I'm treated both by Dr. Tootle and by Mrs. Tootle. You were witness of his insulting behaviour this very afternoon. He openly takes the side of the boys against me; he ridicules my accent; he treats me as no gentleman can treat another, unless one of them's no gentleman at all! And, Mr. Waymark, I won't stand ut!"

Mr. O'Gree's accent was very strong indeed, especially in his present mood. Waymark listened with what gravity he could command.

"You're quite right," he said in reply. "Tootle's behaviour was especially scandalous to-day. I should certainly take some kind of notice of it."

"Notuss, sir, notuss! I'll take that amount of notuss of it that all the metropoluss shall hear of my wrongs. I'll assault 'um, sir; I'll assault 'um in the face of the school,—the very next time he dares to provoke me! I'll rise in my might, and smite his bald crown with his own ruler! I'm not a tall man, Mr. Waymark, but I can reach his crown, and that he shall be aware of before he knows ut. He sets me at

naught in my own class, sir; he poo-poohs my mathematical demonstrations, sir; he encourages my pupils in insubordination! And Mrs. Tootle! Bedad, if I don't invent some device for revenging myself on that supercilious woman. The very next time she presumes to address me disrespectfully at the dinner-table, sir, I'll rise in my might, sir,—see if I don't!—and I'll say to her, 'Mrs. Tootle, ma'am, you seem to forget that I'm a gentleman, and have a gentleman's susceptibilities. When I treat *you* with disrespect, ma'am, pray tell me of ut, and I'll inform you you speak an untruth!'"

Waymark smiled, with the result that the expression of furious wrath immediately passed from his colleague's countenance, giving place to a broad grin.

"Waymark, look here!" exclaimed the Irishman, snatching up a piece of chalk, and proceeding to design certain outlines rapidly upon the slate over the mantelpiece. "Here's Tootle, a veritable Goliath;—here's me, as it were David. Observe; Tootle holds in his hand his 'little compendium,' raised in haughty superciliousness.

Observe me with the ruler!—I am on tiptoe; I am taking aim; there is wrath in every sinew of my arrum! My arrum descends on the very centre of Tootle's bald pate,"—

"Mr. O'Gree!"

The tableau was most effective. Unnoticed by either the Irishman or Waymark, the door had opened behind them, and there had appeared a little, scraggy, red-faced woman, dressed in faded green, with a dirty red wrapper about her shoulders. It was Mrs. Tootle. She had overheard almost the whole of O'Gree's vivid comment upon his graphic illustration, in silence, until at length she could hold her peace no longer, and gave utterance to the teacher's name in a voice which trembled with rage and mortification.

"Mr. O'Gree! Are you aware of my presence, sir?"

The chalk dropped from O'Gree's fingers, but otherwise his attitude remained unaltered; struck motionless with horror, he stood pointing to the drawing on the slate, his face pale, his eyes fascinated by those of Mrs. Tootle. The

latter proceeded in a high note, and with much violence of utterance.

"Well, sir, as soon as you have had enough of your insulting buffoonery, perhaps you will have the goodness to attend to me, and to your duty! What do you mean by allowing the dormitories to get into this state of uproar? There's been a pillow-fight going on for the last half-hour, and you pay no sort of attention; the very house is shaking! I suppose you would have *me* go in among a lot of naked youths, and establish order! Attend to your duty, sir, this minute!"

"I — I — I will, ma'am," stammered poor O'Gree, utterly cowed. "I protest I had not heard a sound, ma'am, or I should have——"

"Perhaps you hear nothing now, sir,—and the doctor suffering from one of his very worst headaches, utterly unable to rest even if the house were perfectly quiet!"

O'Gree darted to the door, past Mrs. Tootle, and was lost to sight. There was indeed a desperate uproar in the higher regions of the house. In a moment the noise increased considerably. O'Gree had rushed up without a

light, and was battling desperately in the darkness with a score of pillow-fighters, roaring out threats the while at the top of his voice. Mrs. Tootle retired from the masters' room with much affectation of dignity, leaving the door open behind her.

Waymark slammed it to, and turned with a laugh to the poor Swiss.

"In low spirits to-night, I'm afraid, Mr. Egger?"

Egger let his chair tilt forward, rose slowly, drew the handkerchief from his mouth and wiped his eyes with it, then exclaimed, in the most pitiful voice,—

"Mr. Waymark, I have made my possible!—I can no more!"

It was his regular phrase on these occasions; Waymark had always much ado to refrain from laughter when he heard it repeated, but he did his best to be seriously sympathetic, and to attempt consolation in such German as was at his command. Egger's despondency only increased, and he wept afresh to hear accents which were intelligible to him. Mr. O'Gree

re-entered the room, and the Swiss retired to his corner.

Philip was hot with excitement and bodily exertion; he came in mopping his forehead, and, without turning to Waymark, stood with eyes fixed on the chalk caricatures. Very gradually he turned round. Waymark was watching him, on his face an expression of subdued mirth. Their looks met, and both exploded in laughter.

"Bedad, my boy," exclaimed O'Gree, "I'm devilish sorry! I wouldn't have had it happen for a quarter's salary,—though I sadly need a new pair of breeches. She's a supercilious cat-o-mountain, and she loses no opportunity of insulting me, but after all she's a woman. D'ye think she heard all I said?"

"Every word, no doubt."

"Bah!" cried the other, reddening more than ever with very shame. "I'm always up to some fool's trick! I must apologize to her; upon my soul. I must apologize! Was ever such infernal luck!"

"Apologize? Humbug. On the whole it's

a very good joke. It was only anticipating your revenge a little."

"Ay, but—well, there's something mean in ridiculing people behind their backs; isn't there, now? I must apologize, my boy."

Waymark with some difficulty succeeded in persuading the sensitive Irishman that by far the pleasantest thing for all concerned would be to make no further reference to the matter. O'Gree acquiesced at last, but was crestfallen for a quarter of an hour longer.

"Come, Mr. Egger," said Waymark, in German, turning to the corner of woe, "let's have some music, please. One or two of the old favourites. Try this tobacco, O'Gree; it's a fresh kind, and will suit you."

"Thanks, my boy. Tell you what, I must really have a glass of beer, to take the taste of that episode out of my mouth. *Monsieur Egger, oon vare de beer, n'est-ce pas? Cela vous donn courage, n'est-ce pas?* Cheer up, *mon ami! Quoi dites-vous pour* 'cheer up'?"

Egger smiled dolefully, but allowed himself to be drawn out of the corner. Philip himself

set off for the beer. His mode of procedure was to go on tip-toe to the top of the kitchen-steps, and, standing there, call very gently to some one below.

"Susan! Susan, my dear! Susan, my angel! Hush; the quart jug, my beloved, if you please. And three glasses, Susan, there's a good cratur."

These requisites were forthcoming, and in a few minutes our friend returned from across the way, bringing a jug full of foaming liquor. The first draught put Philip into his normal spirits.

"By the bye, Waymark," he exclaimed, "what a stunner the new governess is! You're a lucky dog, to sit in the same room with her. What's her name, I say?"

"Miss Enderby. You've seen her, have you?"

"I caught a glimpse of her as she came downstairs; it was quite enough; she floored me. I'd stand on my head for half an hour to look at her for two minutes. What grace of motion! What divine eyes! What a turn of the head! If ever she passes me again, I shall fall down and worship her, I know I shall. She's never

been out of my thoughts for a minute since I saw her. 'I love her, I love her, and who shall dare, to chide me for loving that teacher fair!'"

"Well, yes," said Waymark, "she has a tolerable face; seems to me a long way too good to be teaching those unlicked cubs. The dragon wasn't too civil to her, though it was the first day."

"Not civil to her? If I were present, and heard that woman breathe the slightest incivility, I'd—"

He broke off in the midst of his vehemence with a startled look towards the door, and the rest of his sentence was buried in another draught of the cheering liquor.

"Mr. Egger," he exclaimed, "a song; I beg, a song. Come, I'll lead off.

'Miss Enderby hath a beaming eye'—

Bah! I'm not in voice to-night."

Egger was persuaded to sit down to the piano. It was a mournful instrument, reduced to discordant wheeziness by perennial five-finger exercises, but the touch of the Swiss could still

evoke from it some kind of harmony. He sang a Volkslied, and in a way which showed that there was poetry in the man's nature, though his outward appearance gave so little promise of it. His voice was very fair, and well suited to express the tender pathos of these inimitable melodies. Waymark always enjoyed this singing; his eyes brightened, and a fine emotion played about his lips. It was an inspiration to him. As he listened, his brain filled with rich fancies; the ambitions, which at times grew feeble before his natural love of ease, stirred themselves strongly within him. At such moments he made resolutions of desperate energy, and felt capable of carrying them into effect. At the same time, the songs woke the passionate elements of his nature, and made him chafe in the bonds of his sordid life. There was that within Osmond Waymark which accorded ill with the position made for him by circumstances.

His favourite song was also that which the Swiss liked best and sang with most feeling; a well-known Swabian melody.

" Wenn's Mailüfterl weht, geht im Wald drauss' der Schnee,
Da heb'n blaue Veigerl die Köpferl in d' Höh,
Und Vögerl die g'schlaf'n hab'n durch d' Winterzeit
Die werd'n wieder munter, und singen voll Freud'

" Jed's Jahr kommt der Frühling, ist d' Winter vorbei,
Der Mensch aber hat nur ein einzigen Mai.
Die Schwalb'n fliegen weit fort, doch zieh'n wieder her ;
Der Mensch wenn er fortgeht, der kommt nimmermehr."

Waymark was silent after this had been sung, and very shortly took his leave. And as he walked along the dark ways to his lodgings, Egger's voice was still in his ears, singing the sad refrain :

" Der Mensch wenn er fortgeht, der kommt nimmermehr."

" Heaven be thanked, no ! " the young man said to himself. " Most of us could well dispense with the one life ; how few would come back from their rest and begin it over again ! "

This, then, was the routine which occupied Waymark's days. Poverty was his familiar companion, and had been so for years. His rent paid each week, there often remained a sum quite insufficient for the absolute necessities

of existence ; for anything more, he had to look to chance pupils in the evenings, and what little he could earn with his pen. He wrote constantly, but as yet had only succeeded in getting two articles printed. That he possessed literary powers of some kind or other, he knew quite well ; but, as he said, the path was not yet hit upon, the true note had not yet been struck. He wrote at present the kind of thing known as "padding" ; his two published articles were more or less pleasantly patched-up essays on popular authors, but he was well aware that criticism was not his direction. These occasional windfalls of precious guineas ought to have been hoarded against the ever-recurring periods of privation, but to do so required a self-denial he did not possess. For one thing, the second-hand book-stalls always proved a fatal temptation ; in this way he had little by little scraped together his three or four hundred volumes. Then, it was a necessity of his existence to mix from time to time in the life of the town, and a stroll into the Strand after nightfall inevitably led to the expenditure of whatever cash his pocket contained. He was

passionately fond of the theatre; the lights about the open entrance drew him on irresistibly, and if, as so often, he had to choose between a meal and a seat in the gallery, the meal was sacrificed. Hunger, indeed, was his normal state; semi-starvation, alternating with surfeits of cheap and unwholesome food, brought about an unhealthy condition of body, and laid the foundations of numberless constitutional ailments. Often he returned to Walcot Square from his day-long drudgery, and threw himself upon the bed, too exhausted to light a fire and make his tea,—for he was his own servant in all things except the weekly cleaning-out of the room. Those were dark hours, and they had to be struggled through in solitude.

Weary as he was he seldom went to bed before midnight, sometimes long after, for he clung to those few hours of freedom with something like savage obstinacy; during this small portion of each day at least he would possess his own soul, be free to think and read. Then came the penalty of anguish unutterable when the morning had to be faced. These dark,

foggy February mornings crushed him with a recurring misery which often drove him to the verge of mania. His head throbbing with the torture of insufficient sleep, he lay in dull half-conscious misery till there was no longer time to prepare breakfast, and he had to hasten off to school after a mouthful of dry bread which choked him. There had been moments when his strength failed, and he found his eyes filling with tears of wretchedness. To face the hideous drudgery of the day's teaching often cost him more than it had cost many men to face the scaffold;—let those smile at this as an exaggeration who are so happy as never to have earned their bread by labour they loathed. The hours between nine and one, the hours between half-past two and five, Waymark cursed them minute by minute, as their awful length was registered by the crawling hands of the school-clock. He tried sometimes in mere self-defence, to force himself into an interest in his work, that the time might go the quicker; but the effort was miserably vain. His senses reeled amid the din and rattle of classes where

discipline was unknown and intelligence almost indiscoverable. Not seldom his temper got the better even of sick lassitude; his face at such times paled with passion, and in ungoverned fury he raved at his tormentors. He awed them, too, but only for the moment, and the waste of misery swallowed him up once more.

Was this to be his life?—he asked himself. Would this last for ever?

For some reason, the morning after the visit to the masters' room just spoken of found him in rather better spirits than usual. Perhaps it was that he had slept fairly well; a gleam of unwonted sunshine had doubtless something to do with it. Yet there was another reason, though he would scarcely admit it to himself. It was the day on which he gave a drawing-lesson to Dr. Tootle's two eldest children. These drawing-lessons were always given in the room up-stairs, which has already been mentioned; which room was also appropriated to the governess who came every morning to teach three other young Tootles, two girls and a boy, the latter con-

sidered not yet old enough to go into the school, though he was nearly nine, and as robust a young ragamuffin as well could be. On the previous day, Waymark had been engaged in the room for half an hour touching up some drawings of boys in the school, which were about to be sent home. He knew that he should find a fresh governess busy with the children, the lady hitherto employed having gone at a moment's notice after a violent quarrel with Mrs. Tootle, an incident which had happened not infrequently before. When he entered the room, he saw a young woman seated with her back to him, penning a copy, whilst the children jumped and rioted about her in their usual fashion. The late governess had been a mature person of features rather serviceable than handsome; that her successor was of a different type appeared sufficiently from the fair round head, the gracefully bended neck, the perfect shoulders, the slight, beautiful form. Waymark took his place and waited with some curiosity till she moved. When she did so, and, rising, suddenly became aware of his presence, there was a little start on

both sides; Miss Enderby—so Waymark soon heard her called by the pupils—had not been aware, owing to the noise, of a stranger's entrance, and Waymark on his side was so struck with the face presented to him. He had expected, at the most, a pretty girl of the commonplace kind: he saw a countenance in which refinement was as conspicuous as rare beauty. She was probably not more than eighteen or nineteen. The face was pale and somewhat thin, the features small and of exquisite delicacy; her eyes had a curious purple tinge, which corresponded with the deep chestnut of her hair. Some would have thought the forehead too large and prominent, or perhaps, the lips too undecided; these faults seemed to show themselves especially in moments of thoughtfulness, when there was an eager, painfully anxious gaze on the face, the explanation of which would clearly have to be sought in circumstances of life. In speaking with the children she rarely if ever smiled, but exhibited a gentle forbearance which had something touching in it; it was almost as though she

appealed for gentleness in return, and feared a harsh word or look.

"That's Mr. Waymark," cried out Master Percy Tootle, the youth of nine, when his over-quick eyes perceived that the two had seen each other. "He's our drawing-master. Do you like the look of him?"

Miss Enderby reddened, and laid her hand on the boy's arm, trying to direct his attention to a book. But the youngster shook off her gentle touch, and looked at his brothers and sisters with a much too knowing grin. Waymark had contented himself with a slight bow, and at once bent again over his work.

Very shortly the two eldest children, both girls, came in, and with them their mother. The latter paid no attention to Waymark, but proceeded to cross-examine the new governess as to her methods of teaching, her experience, and so on, in the coarse and loud manner which characterized Mrs. Tootle. Miss Enderby replied in a low voice and timidly.

"You'll find my children clever," said Mrs. Tootle, "at least that has been the opinion of all

their teachers hitherto. If they don't make progress, it certainly will not be their own fault. At the same time, they are high-spirited, and require to be discreetly managed. This, as I previously informed you, must be done without the help of punishment in any shape; I disapprove of those methods altogether. Now let me hear you give them a lesson in geography."

Waymark retired at this juncture; he felt that it would be nothing less than cruelty to remain. The episode, however, had lightened his day with an interest of a very unusual kind. And so it was that, on the following morning, not only the gleam of watery sunshine, but also the thought of an hour to be spent in the presence of that strange, timid face, brought him on his way to the school with an unwonted resignation. Unfortunately his drawing lessons were only given on two mornings in the week. Still, there would be something in future to look forward to, a novel sensation at the Academy.

CHAPTER IV.

THIS PICTURE AND THAT.

HARRIET SMALES had left home in a bad temper that Sunday afternoon, and when she came back to tea, after her walk with Julian, her state of mind did not appear to have undergone any improvement. She took her place at the tea-table in silence. She and Mrs. Ogle were alone this evening; the latter's husband—he was a journeyman printer, and left entirely in his wife's hands the management of the shop in Gray's Inn Road—happened to be away. Mrs. Ogle was a decent, cheerful woman of motherly appearance. She made one or two attempts to engage Harriet in conversation, but, failing, subsided into silence, only looking askance at the girl from time to time. When she had finished her tea and bread-and-butter,

Harriet coughed, and, without facing her companion, spoke in rather a cold way.

"I may be late back to-night, Mrs. Ogle. You won't lock the door?"

"I sha'n't go to bed till eleven myself," was the reply.

"But it may be after twelve when I get back."

"Where are you going to, Harriet?"

"If you must know always, Mrs. Ogle, I'm going to see my friend in Westminster."

"Well, it ain't no business of mine, my girl," returned the woman, not unkindly, "but I think it's only right I should have some idea where you spend your nights. As long as you live in my house, I'm responsible for you, in a way."

"I don't want any one to be responsible for me, Mrs. Ogle."

"Maybe not, my girl. But young people ain't always the best judges of what's good for them, and what isn't. I don't think your cousin 'ud approve of your being out so late. I shall sit up for you, and you mustn't be after twelve."

It was said very decidedly. Harriet made no reply, but speedily dressed and went out. She

walked by the nearest cuts to Westminster, and sought a neighbourhood which most decently dressed people would have been chary of entering after nightfall, or indeed at any other time, unless compelled to do so. The little streets along which she passed familiarly were almost within the shadow of the Abbey, yet it would not have been easy to match them for noisomeness and horror in any obscurest part of London. During the last few years a considerable portion of the ground has been cleared and rebuilt upon, but there still remain in the locality very favourable samples of the things that were. The girl found the object of her walk in a dirty little public-house at the corner of two foul and narrow by-ways; the name of this place of entertainment was the Clock House, due to the fact of there being a clock above the doorway for public inspection. She entered by a private door, and passed into a parlour, which was behind the bar.

A woman was sitting in the room, beguiling her leisure with a Sunday paper. She was dressed with vulgar showiness, and made a lavish

display of jewellery, more or less valuable ; there were seven rings divided between both hands, a bracelet on one arm, a silver necklet, a long gold watch-chain. She illustrated herein the practice so common among women in her position, who prefer this mode of investing spare cash, seeing that it most readily allows of realization at any moment, at the same time satisfying their personal vanity. The coarseness of her face quite corresponded with her attire. Indirectly, she has already come under our notice ; eight years ago she was a servant in Mr. Smales's house, and her name was Sarah. She had married in the mean while, and become Mrs. Sprowl.

She welcomed her visitor with a friendly nod, but did not rise.

"I thought it likely you'd look in, as you missed larst week. How's things goin' in your part o' the world ?"

"Very badly," returned Harriet, throwing off her hat and cloak, and going to warm her hands and feet at the fire. "It won't last much longer, that's the truth of it."

"Eh well, it's all in a life; we all has our little trials an' troubles, as the sayin' is."

"How's the baby?" asked Harriet, looking towards a bundle of wrappers which lay on a sofa.

"I doubt it's too good for this world," returned the mother, grinning in a way which made her ugly face peculiarly revolting. "Dessay it'll join its little brother an' sister before long. Mike put it in the club yes'day."

The burial-club, Mrs. Sprowl meant, and Harriet evidently understood the allusion.

"Have you walked?" went on the woman, doubling up her paper, and then throwing it aside. "Dessay you could do with somethin' to take the cold orff yer chest.—Liz," she called out to some one behind the bar, with which the parlour communicated by an open door; "two Irish!"

The glasses were brought in by a young girl whose look suggested feeble-mindedness, if not idiocy. She smiled constantly in a vacant manner, and moved her head about fantastically. At present she seemed to be suffering from the

result of some accident; her face was all marked with recent scratches and scars, which disfigured her horribly.

"Why, what's come to you, Liz?" asked Harriet, on seeing her. "What have you been doing with your face?"

"Gravel-rash," put in Mrs. Sprowl, with a laugh, whilst the girl herself only nodded and smiled.

"Don't you know what that means?" she went on, as Harriet looked puzzled. "Liz got a drop too much th'other night,—didn't you, Liz?—and she didn't know no better than let herself be robbed by a chap, down in Smith Street. It was rough on poor Liz, an' she got shirty, an' kicked up a row, an' gave a chap as was standin' by one for himself; but it was the wrong chap, an' she was run in. She made a good fight, did Liz, and the copper had his job to take her, but he tripped her up, an' so she copped the gravel-rash, you see."

Harriet laughed at this entertaining story, mixing her whisky with hot water the while. The poor creature who was the object of Mrs.

Sprowl's mirth looked on, proud of being thus noticed.

"Liz is gettin' starchy, Harriet," the humorous lady went on; "she's got a soldier for her walkin'-stick now; ain't you, Liz? Ho, ho, ho!"

Somebody called out from the bar, and the girl ran off to attend on customers. In a moment she reappeared in the doorway, and looked at Mrs. Sprowl with a wink and a peculiar motion of the thumb over her shoulder. The woman at once started up and went into the bar. Leaning on the counter, in one of the compartments, was something which a philanthropist might perhaps have had the courage to still claim as a human being; to all appearances it represented some loathsome monstrosity all the more fearful from its distant resemblance to a man. A very tall creature, with bent shoulders, and head seemingly growing straight out of its chest; thick, grizzled hair hiding almost every vestige of feature, with the exception of one dreadful red eye, its fellow being dead and sightless. It had laid on the counter, with palms downward as if

concealing something, two huge hairy paws. Its clothing, if the word can be used, was a huddled mass of vilest rags. Its presence was pollution to all the senses; the air grew foul around it, as it breathed with the heavy snorting of a beast. Mrs. Sprowl seemed familiar with the appearance of this object; she addressed it rather bad-temperedly, but otherwise much as she would have spoken to any other customer.

"No you don't, Slimy! No you don't! What you have in this house you pay for in coppers, so you know. Next time I catch you tryin' to ring the changes, I'll have you run in, and then you'll get a warm bath, which you wouldn't partic'lar care for."

The creature spoke, in hoarse, jumbled words not easy to catch unless you listened closely.

"If you've any accusion to make agin me, Mrs. Sprowl, p'r'aps you'll wait till you can prove it. I want change for arf a suvrin: ain't that straight, now?"

"Straight or not, you won't get no change over this counter, so there you've the straight

tip. Now sling yer 'ook, Slimy, an' get it somewhere else."

"If you've any accusion to make,"—

"Hold yer noise!—What's he ordered, Liz?"

"Pot o' old six," answered the girl.

"Got sixpence, Slimy?"

"No, I ain't, Mrs. Sprowl," muttered the creature. "I've got arf a suvrin,"—

"Then go an' get change for it. Now, once more, sling yer 'ook."

The object moved away, sending back a horrible glare from its one fiery eyeball. It disappeared through the swinging door.

Mrs. Sprowl re-entered the parlour, and quietly resumed her conversation.

"I wish you'd take me on as barmaid, Sarah," Harriet said, when she had drunk off her glass of spirits.

"Take you on?" exclaimed the other, with surprise. "Why, have you fallen out with your cousin? I thought you was goin' to be married soon."

"I didn't say for sure that I was; I only said

I might be. Any way it won't be just yet, and I'm tired of my place in the shop."

"Don't you be a fool, Harriet," said the other, with genial frankness. "You're well enough off. You stick where you are till you get married. You wouldn't make nothin' at our business; 'tain't all sugar an' lemon, an' sittin' drinkin' twos o' whisky till further orders. You want a quiet, easy business, you do, an' you've got it. If you keep worritin' yerself this way, you won't never make old bones, an' that's the truth. You wait a bit, an' give yer cousin a chance to arst you,—if that's what you're troublin' about."

"I've given him lots o' chances," said Harriet, peevishly.

"Eh well, give him lots more, an' it'll all come right. We're all born, but we're not buried — Hev' another Irish?"

Harriet allowed herself to be persuaded to take another glass. She continued sitting in the parlour all through the evening, at times being quitted by Mrs. Sprowl, who was occasionally wanted at the bar. The frequenters of the

Clock House, especially on Sunday night, were not remarkable for orderliness or self-restraint, and the landlady had frequent opportunity for exercising the loud voice and authoritative manner which were her most useful endowments. When the miserable little baby on the sofa woke up, at some rather more furious outbreak in the bar, and began to whine from amid its smothering wrappers, Harriet took it on her lap, and seemed to find a sort of pleasure in nursing it into quietness again.

When the clock pointed to half-past nine, she rose and prepared to depart. Leave-taking, however, could not be satisfactorily got through without yet another glass of spirits; thus fortified, Harriet left the house. She had told Mrs. Sprowl that she would take the 'bus and go straight home; but something seemed to have led her to alter her purpose, for she made her way to Westminster Bridge, and crossed the river. Then she made some inquiries of a policeman, and, in consequence, got into a Kennington omnibus. Very shortly she was set down close by Walcot Square. She walked about till,

with some difficulty in the darkness, she had discovered the number at which Julian had told her his friend lived. The house found, she began to pace up and down on the opposite pavement, always keeping her eyes fixed on the same door. She was soon shivering in the cold night air, and quickened her walk. It was rather more than an hour before at length the door she was watching opened, and our two friends came out together. Harriet followed them as closely as she could, until she saw that she herself was observed. Thereupon she walked away, and, by a circuit, ultimately came back into the main road, where she took a 'bus going northwards.

Having seen how Harriet liked to spend her free evenings, let us turn our attention to her cousin, and observe him one night after the shop is closed and he is at liberty to follow his own inclinations. By the special favour of his employer, he is allowed to have a fire in his bedroom, and here he sits, the world shut out, his thoughts living in long past times, rebuilding

the ruins of a fallen Empire. What matter that all day long he stands behind a counter and dispenses drugs, is familiar with the pharmacopœia, applies his wits to the deciphering of fashionable doctors' crabbed prescriptions? The lamp in his bedroom is as powerful as that possessed by Aladdin; once lit, it creates for him a magic world. A shade concentrates its glow upon the fair pages of enchanted volumes; at other times, upon sheets of paper which are slowly covered with writing in Julian's clear, fine hand.

When he was eighteen, the lad had the good luck to light upon a copy of Gibbon in a second-hand book-shop, the price only six shillings. It was the first edition; six noble quarto volumes, clean and firm in the old bindings. Often he had turned longing eyes upon newer copies of the great book, but the price had always put them beyond his reach. Six shillings, however, he could and did afford, paying the money down with palpitating heart and hands which trembled visibly. The bookseller made two parcels for him, three volumes in

each, and these he carried off in a state of exaltation not easily conceived. The weight—no slight one—was nothing to him; he hurried along as though unburdened, and reached home with the perspiration streaming from every pore. Heavens! the joy of that first half-hour, spent in turning over the creamy pages, catching here and there names which as yet were little more than names, getting the first ravishing glimpses of a marvellous new land, with the assured promise of a rich share in all its milk and honey! That very night he solemnly laid open the first volume at the first page, propping it on a couple of meaner books, and, after glancing through the short Preface, began to read with a mind as devoutly disposed as that of any most pious believer poring upon his Bible. "In the second century of the Christian Æra, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour." With what a grand epic roll, with what anticipations of solemn music, did the

noble history begin! Far, far into the night Julian turned over page after page, thoughtless of sleep and the commonplace duties of the morrow. His soul was strong within him; grand possibilities visioned themselves before his mind's eye. All that he read converted itself into poetry; the driest details of law, administration, finance, became indispensable chords in the grand hymn; history and prophecy blended in harmony deep and sweet as that of the morning stars when they sang together.

Since then Julian had mastered his Gibbon, knew him from end to end, and joyed in him more than ever. Whenever he had a chance of obtaining any of the writers, ancient or modern, to whom Gibbon refers, he read them and added to his knowledge. About a year ago, he had picked up an old Claudian, and the reading of the poet had settled him to a task which he had before that doubtfully sought. He wanted to write either a poem or a drama on some subject taken from the 'Decline and Fall,' and now, with Claudian's help, he fixed upon Stilicho for his hero. The form, he then decided, should be

dramatic. Upon 'Stilicho' he had now been engaged for a year, and to-night he is writing the last words of the last scene. Shortly after twelve he has finished it, and, throwing down his pen, paces about the room with enviable feelings.

He had not as yet mentioned to Waymark the work he was engaged upon, though he had confessed that he wrote verses at times. He wished to complete it, and then read it to his friend. It was now only the middle of the week, and though he had decided previously to wait till his visit to Walcot Square next Sunday before saying a word about 'Stilicho,' he could not refrain now from hastily penning a note to Waymark, and going out to post it at once. It was merely to say that he had just completed a play he had been writing, and would ask Waymark to let him read it aloud when they met on Sunday. To this there came an answer on the following day, a line or two in Waymark's heartiest vein, anticipating joyfully the treat that was offered him. Julian felt that all his delights in the achievement were doubled by the possession of this sympathetic friend.

When the day came, the weather would not allow the usual walk with Harriet, and Julian could not help feeling glad that it was so. He was too pre-occupied to talk in the usual way with the girl, and he knew how vain it would be to try and make her understand his state of mind. Still, he went to see her as usual, and sat for an hour in Mrs. Ogle's parlour. At times, throughout the week, he had thought of the curious resemblance between Harriet and the girl he had noticed on leaving Waymark's house last Sunday, and now he asked her, in a half-jesting way, whether it had really been she.

"How could it be?" said Harriet, carelessly. "I can't be in two places at once."

"Did you stay at home that evening?"

"No,—not all the evening."

"What friends are they you go to, when you are out at night, Harriet?"

"Oh, some relations of the Colchester people. —I suppose you've been spending most of your time in Kennington since Sunday?"

"I haven't left home. In fact, I've been

very busy. I've just finished some work that has occupied me for nearly a year."

After all, he could not refrain from speaking of it, though he had made up his mind not to do so.

"Work? What work?" asked Harriet, with the suspicious look which came into her grey eyes whenever she heard something she could not understand.

"Some writing. I've written a play."

"A play? Will it be acted?"

"Oh no, it isn't meant for acting."

"What's the good of it then?"

"It's written in verse. I shall perhaps try to get it published.

"Shall you get money for it?"

"That is scarcely likely. In all probability I shall not be able to get it printed at all."

"Then what's the good of it?" repeated Harriet, still suspicious, and a little contemptuous.

"It has given me pleasure, that's all."

Julian was glad when at length he could take his leave. He rode to Kennington, both on account of the weather and to save time. Way-

mark received him with a pleased smile, and much questioning.

"I took it for granted," he said, "that it would be historical and poetical. Why did you keep it such a secret? I shall try my hand at a play some day or other, but, as you can guess, the material will scarcely be sought in Gibbon. It will be desperately modern, and possibly not altogether in accordance with the views of the Lord Chamberlain. What's the time? Four o'clock. We'll have a cup of coffee and then fall to. I'm desperately eager to hear your 'deep-chested music,' your 'hollow oes and aes.' Where do you lay the opening scene?"

The reading took some three hours; Waymark smoked a vast number of pipes the while, and was silent till the close. Then he got up from his easy-chair, took a step forward, and held out his hand. His face glowed with the frankest enthusiasm.

"By Jeroboam the son of Nebat!" he exclaimed, with a strange oath frequently on his lips. "If I had written that tragedy, I should think myself of no small account among the

sons of men! You are a poet, my boy, and that of no mean stamp! Does your worthy employer know whom he has got behind his counter? Some day that chemist's shop will be an object of pilgrimages, mark my word."

He could not express himself with sufficient vehemence. Julian sat, with the manuscript rolled up in his hands, on his face a glow of unconcealable delight.

"It's very kind of you to speak in this way," he faltered at length.

"Kind! How the deuce should I speak? But come, we will have this off to a publisher's forthwith. Shall you need to make another copy first?"

"Do you think there is the least chance of any one accepting it?"

"That I can't say. But in any case it shall not be our fault if your light remains under a bushel. We'll post it off to Walker and Sebright; they are the most likely men, I should think."

"I have heard," said Julian, "that poetry is not generally very welcome to publishers."

"No more is anything that is not likely to tickle the ear of Gath and make rumours in the streets of Askelon. Oh, we must of course be prepared for all manner of disappointments. Heaven forbid that I should set you dreaming of Ormus and of Ind,—"

"I care nothing for money results," broke in Julian, very honestly; "but I should like to see it printed."

"Of course you would! Confound you, Casti, why don't you smoke? Now a pipe together would make our fellowship complete. Well, we'll brew another cup of coffee. No, we'll have some ale, a foaming flagon from the tap round the corner. I shall have to fetch it myself, but never mind; perish respectability, after such an evening as this!"

The ale was procured, and Waymark drank success to the poem.

"You will infect me with your own energy," he exclaimed, "and ultimately compel me to do something. By the Lord, I grow old; if I don't mind, the working time of life will have gone by unused. It's my cursed

bondage that takes all the spirit out of me, and leaves me fit for nothing each night but railing and despondency. Your position is enviable in comparison; at least so it seems to me. Anything would be preferable to this cursed gerund-grinding. I shall throw it up one day, and let the morrow look out for itself. And what should I do if I were free? You have no experience of this uncertainty as to your true path; you go at the thing which has attracted you since boyhood, and you succeed. Have you any ideas for the next work?"

"Yes; but so daring that they hardly bear putting into words."

"Try the effect on me."

"I have even thought," said Julian, with embarrassment, "of a very long poem—in fact, an Epic. I should like to take this huge fact of the fall of the Western Empire and somehow deal with it in an Epic. Virgil wrote of the founding of Rome; her dissolution is a grander subject. It would mean years of preparation, and again years in the writing. How glorious to give one's life to the task!"

"Verily, a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine. Who knows what you may perform! It is time that the world gave birth to another Epic; we have had enough of fragmentary story-telling and ineffectual rhymesters."

There was high talk in Walcot Square that evening. All unknown to its other worthy inhabitants, the poor lodging-house was converted into a temple of the Muses, and harmonies as from the lyre of Apollo's self throbbed in the hearts of the two friends. The future was their inexhaustible subject, the seed-plot of strange hopes and desires. Good, for one at least of them, that the book of fate was hidden. Good, perhaps, for all of us, and in seeming kindness. But there comes a moment when "the page prescribed" is the *last* page, and the anguish of retrospect, though it endure but a moment, will outweigh all the baseless glories of by-gone days.

CHAPTER V.

THE WAY OUT.

THE ruling spirit of the Academy was Mrs. Tootle. Her husband's constitutional headache, and yet more constitutional laziness, left to her almost exclusively the congenial task of guiding the household, and even of disciplining the school. When she headed one of the tables at meal-times, she had by her side a little note-book, with a pencil, and herein she noted "impositions" against the names of such boys as happened to make themselves personally objectionable to her. In lesson-time she would even flit about the class-rooms, and not scruple to administer sharp rebukes to a teacher whose pupils were disorderly, the effect of this naturally being to make confusion worse confounded. The boys of course hated her with the hatred of

which schoolboys alone are capable, and many a practical joke was played at her expense, not, however, with impunity. Still more pronounced, if possible, was the animus entertained against Mrs. Tootle's offspring. These youngsters, male and female, feeling secure in their mother's protection, indulged themselves in a haughtiness of demeanour towards all and sundry which was very edifying. Even the youngest, a little girl of four, would cry out at dinner, "Ma, Thompson making faces at me; punish Thompson"; and when Thompson had his hundred lines duly entered in the note-book, his feeling towards the cherub may be faintly imagined. But it was upon the head of Master Felix Tootle, the boy of nine, that the full energy of detestation concentrated itself. He was, in truth, as offensive a young imp as the soil of a middle-class boarding-school could well produce. If Mrs. Tootle ruled the Academy, he in turn ruled Mrs. Tootle, and on all occasions showed himself a most exemplary autocrat. His position, however, as in the case of certain other autocratic rulers, had its disadvantages; he could never

venture to wander out of ear-shot of his father or mother, who formed his body-guard, and the utmost prudence did not suffice to protect him from an occasional punch on the head, or a nip in a tender part, meant probably as earnest of more substantial kindnesses to be conferred upon him at the very earliest opportunity.

To poor Egger fell the pleasant duty of instructing these young Tootles in the elements of the French language. For that purpose he went up every morning to the class-room on the first floor, and for a while relieved Miss Enderby of her charge. With anguish of spirit he felt the approach of the moment which summoned him to this dread duty, for, in addition to the lively spite of Master Felix and the other children, he had to face the awful superintendence of Mrs. Tootle herself, who was invariably present at these lessons. Mrs. Tootle had somehow conceived the idea that French was a second mother-tongue to her, and her intercourse with Mr. Egger was invariably carried on in that language. Now this was a refinement of torture, seeing that it was often impossible to gather

a meaning from her remarks, whilst to show any such difficulty was to incur her most furious wrath. Egger trembled when he heard the rustle of her dress outside, the perspiration stood on his forehead as he rose and bowed before her.

"Bon jour, Monsieur," she would come in exclaiming. "Quel un beau matin! Vous trouverez les jeunes dames et messieurs en bons esprits ce matin."

The spirits of Master Felix had manifested themselves already in his skilfully standing a book upright on the teacher's chair, so that when Egger subsided from his obeisance he sat down on a sharp edge and was thrown into confusion.

"Monsieur Félix," cried his mother, "que faites-vous lá?—Les jeunes messieurs anglais sont plus spirituels que les jeunes messieurs suisses, n'est ce pas, Monsieur Egger?"

"En effet, madame," muttered the teacher, nervously arranging his books.

"Mademoiselle Josephine, montrez à Monsieur Egger votre exercice. Il faut vous informer,

Monsieur, que cette exercise a eu le bienfait de mes corrections. Vous l'observez, n'est-ce pas ?"

Egger would not for his life have dared, after this, to hint at a single fault in the composition, though scarcely a word of it was correct. He ran over it, murmuring "très-bien, très-bien," whereat Mrs. Tootle was much delighted.

"Monsieur Egger," she exclaimed, with a burst of good humour, "est-ce vrai ce qu'on dit que les Suisses sont si excessivement sujets à être *chez-malades ?*"

The awful moment had come. What on earth did *chez-malades* mean ? Was he to answer yes or no ? In his ignorance of her meaning, either reply might prove offensive. He reddened, fidgetted on his chair, looked about him with an anguished mute appeal for help. Mrs. Tootle repeated her question with emphasis and a change of countenance which he knew too well. The poor fellow had not the tact to appear to understand and, as he might easily have done, mystify her by some idiomatic remark. He stammered out his apologies and excuses, with the effect of making Mrs. Tootle furious.

"Monsieur Félix," she cried out, by way of changing the subject, "asseyez-vous tout-de-suite! Monsieur Egger, it faut commencer le leçon, s'il vous plaît. Nous tous attendons, vous voyez."

Then follows a terrible hour of it, at the end of which poor Egger rushes down to the Masters' Room, and, sitting down at the table, covers his head with his hands and weeps, regardless of the boy who is strumming his exercises on the piano. Waymark or O'Gree would shortly come in to summon him to some other class, whereupon he would rise, and, with gestures of despair, groan out,—

"Let me, let me!—I have made my possible; I can no more!"

Waymark alone feared neither Mrs. Tootle nor her hopeful son, and, in turn, was held in some little awe by both of them. The lady had at first tried the effect of interfering in his classes, as she did in those of the other masters, but the result was not encouraging.

"Don't you think, Mr. Waymark," she had said one day, as she walked through the school-

room and paused to listen to our friend's explanation of some rule in English grammar; "don't you think it would be better to confine yourself to the terms of the Doctor's little compendium? The boys are used to it."

"In this case," replied Waymark, calmly, "I think the terms of the compendium are rather too technical for the fourth class."

"Still, it is customary in this school to use the compendium, and it has never yet been found unsatisfactory. Whilst you are discoursing at such length, I observe your class gets very disorderly."

Waymark looked at her, but kept silence. Mrs. Tootle stood still.

"What are you waiting for, Mr. Waymark?" she asked sharply.

"Till your presence has ceased to distract the boys' attention, Mrs. Tootle," was the straightforward reply.

The woman was disconcerted, and, as Waymark preserved his calm silence, she had no alternative but to withdraw, after giving him a look not easily forgotten. He preserved the

same independence during the lessons to the young Tootles up-stairs. The conflict of authorities between Master Felix and himself had been a notable one, but very soon decided. The boy flatly refused to obey him, and, in consequence, was bidden to leave the room. On his refusing, Waymark caught him under the arms, and deposited him, kicking and yelling, on the landing without. Mrs. Tootle was at once on the scene.

"What does this mean, Mr. Waymark?" she demanded, with an excessive dignity which had been her manner towards him since the first encounter.

"It means that the boy has been impertinent, and that I won't have it."

"I do not allow my children to be touched, sir. You must preserve discipline in the usual way."

"The usual way is no good. If the boy behaves to me again as he has done this morning, I shall box his ears."

Waymark was angry, and did not care to weigh his words.

"Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Tootle.

The teacher paid no attention, and turned to the other children. Mrs. Tootle stared at him for a moment, then called Felix into the room.

"Felix, resume your place."

"And," added Waymark, "behave yourself, or——"

But there was another person whose sufferings under the tyranny of mother and children were perhaps keenest of all. If Mrs. Tootle was autocratic with the masters, her treatment of successive governesses who tried to teach her children deserved, in all seriousness, the name of brutal. Here, at all events, she felt herself in no danger of meeting her equals; her delight in badgering these poor creatures was a remarkable phenomenon. Their methods were always wrong, they had no idea of maintaining discipline, they showed unbecoming familiarity, their information was defective, their very pronunciation could not escape censure. One after another gave up their work in despair, and fled from the fearful woman. The latest, Miss Enderby, seemed to possess especial power of exasperating her tor-

mentor, perhaps because she was so completely passive, and offered no real occasion for rebuke. Her quiet, ladylike demeanour made Mrs. Tootle's vulgarity exceptionally striking, by force of contrast. At any excessive outburst of rude violence, she would look up with something of pained surprise, but never expressed anything of her feeling in words. Waymark had frequent opportunities of observing her under these persecutions, and learned to recognize in her the signs of acutest suffering. Many times he left the room, rather than add to her misery by his presence; very often it was as much as he could do to refrain from taking her part, and defending her against Mrs. Tootle. He had never been formally introduced to Miss Enderby, and during several weeks held no kind of communication with her beyond a "good morning" when he entered the room and found her there. The first quarter of a year was drawing to a close when there occurred the first conversation between them. Waymark had been giving some of the children their drawing-lesson, whilst the governess taught the

two youngest. The class-time being over, the youngsters all scampered off. For a wonder, Mrs. Tootle was not present, and Waymark seized the opportunity to exchange a word with the young lady.

"I fear your pupils give you dreadful trouble," he said, as he stood by the window pointing a pencil.

She started at being spoken to.

"They are full of life," she replied, in the low sad voice which was natural to her.

"Which would all seem to be directed towards shortening that of others," said Waymark, with a smile.

"They are intelligent," the governess ventured to suggest, after a silence. "It would be a pleasure to teach them if they—if they were a little more orderly."

"Certainly. If their parents had only common sense,"—

He stopped. A flush had risen to the girl's face, and a slight involuntary motion of her hand seemed to warn him. The reason was that Mrs. Tootle stood in the doorway, to

which he had his back turned. Miss Enderby said a quick "good morning" and left him.

He was taking up some papers, preparatory to leaving the room, when he noticed that the governess had left behind her a little book in which she was accustomed to jot down lessons for the children. He took it up and examined it. On the first page was written "Maud Enderby, South Bank, Regent's Park." He repeated the name to himself several times, becoming thoughtful. Then he smiled, this being occasioned by his recalling the way in which the governess had warned him that Mrs. Tootle could overhear what he said. Somehow, this slight gesture of the girl's had seemed to bring them closer to each other; there was an unpremeditated touch of intimacy in the movement, which it pleased him to think of. This was by no means the first time that he had stood with thoughts busied about her, but, very strangely, the brief exchange of words and what had followed gave something of a new complexion to his feelings. Previously he had been interested in her; her striking features

had made him wonder what was the history which their expression concealed; but her extreme reticence and the timid coldness of her look had left his senses unmoved. Now he all at once experienced the awakening of quite a new interest; there had been something in her eyes as they met his which seemed to desire sympathy; he was struck with the possibilities of emotion in the face which this one look had revealed to him. Her situation seemed, when he thought of it, to affect him more strongly than hitherto; he felt that it would be more difficult henceforth to maintain his calmness when he saw her insulted by Mrs. Tootle or disrespectfully used by the children.

Nor did the new feelings subside as rapidly as they had arisen. At home that night he was unable to settle to his usual occupations, and, as a visit to his friends in the Masters' Room would have been equally distasteful, he rambled about the streets and so tired himself. His duties did not take him up to the children's class-room on the following morning, but he invented an excuse for going there, and felt

rewarded by the very faint smile and the inclination of the head with which Miss Enderby returned his "good morning." Day after day, he schemed to obtain an opportunity of speaking with her again, and he fancied that she herself helped to remove any chances that might have occurred. Throughout his lessons, his attention remained fixed upon her; he studied her face intently, and was constantly discovering in it new meanings. When she caught his eyes thus busy with her, she evinced, for a moment, trouble and uneasiness; he felt sure that she arranged her seat so as to have her back to him more frequently than she had been accustomed to do. Her work appeared to him to be done with less self-forgetfulness than formerly; the rioting and impertinence of the children seemed to trouble her more; she bore Mrs. Tootle's interference with something like fear. Once, when Master Felix had gone beyond his wonted licence, in his mother's absence, Waymark went so far as to call him to order. As soon as he had spoken, the girl looked up at him in a startled way, and seemed

silently to beg him to refrain. All this only strengthened the influence she exercised upon Waymark. He found himself doing curious things; for instance, when she read to her pupils, he would close his eyes for a moment and try to imagine that they were alone together in the room, and she was reading to him. Her mere voice became a keen pleasure to his ears. He observed the details of her dress as he had not done before; everything she wore was of extreme plainness, and no doubt indicated very restricted circumstances. Who, indeed, would be teaching Mrs. Tootle's children who was not driven to such an occupation by dire necessity?

Preoccupations of this kind served, it is true, to make certain hours in the week pass more easily for Waymark than they had been wont to do, but their effect on the whole was not to improve his spirits and to render the burden of his existence lighter. There were periods when the fiends of melancholy and savage discontent expelled from his soul every cheerful impulse and utterly overcame the inherent hopefulness of his self-reliant disposition. Since the climax

of wretchedness which had resulted in his advertisement and the forming of Julian Casti's acquaintance, a moderate cheerfulness had possessed him. Now he once more felt the clouds sinking about him, was aware of many a threatening portent, the meaning whereof he too well understood. There had been a week or two of prevailing bad weather, a state of things which always wrought harmfully upon him; his thoughts darkened under the dark sky, and the daily downpour of hateful rain sapped his energies. It was within a few days of Easter, but the prospect of a holiday had no effect upon him. Night after night he lay in fever and unrest. He felt as though some voice were calling upon him to undertake a vaguely hazardous enterprise which yet he knew not the nature of. The crises in our lives do not arrive wholly without premonition, but the weight of complete misery was too familiar to Waymark to point to anything more than a sick and heartless struggle.

On one of these evenings, Mr. O'Gree announced to him that Miss Enderby was going

to give up her position at the end of the quarter. Philip had gathered this from a conversation heard during the day between Dr. Tootle and his wife.

"The light of my life will be gone out," exclaimed O'Gree, "when I am no longer able to catch a glimpse of her as she goes past the schoolroom door. And I've never even had a chance of speaking to her. You know the tale of Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth. Suppose I were to rush out and throw my top-coat on the muddy door-step, just as she's going out; d'ye think she'd say thank you?"

"Probably," muttered Waymark, without knowing what he said. It was Mr. O'Gree's habit to affect this violent devotion to each new governess in turn, but Waymark did not seem to find the joke amusing at present.

"Bedad, I'll do it then! Or rather, I would, if I'd two top-coats. Hang it! There's no behaving like a gentleman on twenty-five pounds a year."

Waymark walked about the streets the greater part of the night, and the next morning came

to school rather late. Dr. Tootle had to consult with him about some matter as soon as he arrived.

"You seem indisposed, Mr. Waymark," the Doctor remarked, when he had in vain tried to elicit intelligible replies to his questions.

"I am a little out of sorts," the other returned, carelessly. "Perhaps we could talk about these things to-morrow."

"As you please," said Dr. Tootle, a little surprised at his assistant's indifference.

It was a drawing-lesson morning. As he went up-stairs, his ears apprised him of the state of things he would find in Miss Enderby's room. The approach of the Easter holidays was making the youngsters even more than usually uproarious, and their insubordination had passed beyond all pretence of attending to tasks. When Waymark entered, his first glance, as always, was towards the governess. She looked harassed and ill; was in vain endeavouring to exert some authority with her gentle voice. Her eyes showed unmistakable gratitude as the teacher appeared, for his approach meant that

she would be relieved from the three elder children. Waymark called sharply to his pupils to come and take their places, but without any attention on their part. Master Felix openly urged the rest to assume a defiant attitude, and began to improvise melodies on a trumpet formed by rolling up a copy-book.

"Felix," said Miss Enderby, "give me your copy-book and go to the drawing-lesson."

The boy removed the trumpet from his mouth, and, waving it once round his head, sent it flying across the room at the speaker; it hit her on the cheek. In the same minute, Waymark had bent across his knee a large pointer which stood in a corner of the room, and had snapped it into two pieces. Holding the lighter of these in one hand, with the other hand he suddenly caught Master Felix by the coat-collar, and in a second had him out of the room and on to the landing. Then did the echoes of the Academy wake to such a bellowing as they had probably never heard before. With a gripe impossible even to struggle against, Waymark held the young imp under his arm, and plied the broken pointer

with amazing vigour; the stripes were almost as loud as the roarings. There was a rush from the rooms below in the direction of the disturbance; all the boys were in a trice leaping about delightedly on the stairs, and behind them came O'Gree, Egger, and Dr. Tootle himself. From the room above rushed out all the young Tootles, yelling for help. Last of all, from still higher regions of the house, there swept down a vision of disordered female attire, dishevelled hair, and glaring eyes; it was Mrs. Tootle, disturbed at her toilet, forgetting all considerations of personal appearance at the alarming outcry. Just as she reached the spot, Waymark's arm dropped in weariness; he flung the howling young monkey into one corner, the stick into another, and deliberately pulled his coat-sleeves into position once more. He felt vastly better for the exercise, and there was even a smile on his heated face.

"You brutal ruffian!" shrieked Mrs. Tootle. "How dare you touch my child! You shall answer for this in the police court, sir. You cowardly brute!"

"Waymark," cried her husband, who had struggled to the scene through the crowd of cheering boys, "what's the meaning of this? You forget yourself, sir. Who gave you authority to use corporal chastisement, above all to my son? This is rather too much, sir!"

"He shall pay for it in the dock and the prison-cell!" screamed Mrs. Tootle, who was hugging in her arms the still roaring Felix. "Send at once for Dr. Smith. The wretch has broken every bone in the darling child's body!"

A wild cheer rose from the surging crowd of boys on the staircase, and cries of "Serve him right!" "Hope he's killed!" "Hurrah for Waymark!" "Give it the young sneak!" and so on, echoed through the house. A calm onlooker might even have been able to recognize amid the plaudits a voice remarkable for a strong brogue. Waymark stood with his hands in his trouser-pockets, and, as soon as he could make himself heard, addressed Dr. Tootle with perfect calmness.

"The boy has long deserved a good thrashing,"

he said, "and I'm glad I lost my temper sufficiently to give him a portion of his deserts. If you wish to know the immediate cause, it simply was that he threw a book at his governess's head and hit her. Any further discussion of the matter had perhaps better be carried on in private."

"Mr. O'Gree," called out the doctor, "take your boys back to their duties, sir! I am quite unable to understand this disgraceful lack of discipline. Every boy who is not at his seat in one minute will have five hundred verses of the Psalms to write out!—Mr. Waymark, I shall be obliged to you if you will step into my study."

Five minutes after, our friend was closeted with Dr. Tootle. The latter had all at once quite put off his appearance of indignation.

"Really," he began, "it's a great pity you let yourself be carried away like that. I think it very probable indeed that Felix deserved castigation of some kind, but you would have done much better to report him to me, you know, and let me see to it. You have put me

in an awkward position. I fear you must make an apology to Mrs. Tootle, and then perhaps the matter can be allowed to blow over."

"I think not," replied Waymark, whose mind was evidently made up. There was a look of recklessness on his face which one could at any time have detected lurking beneath the hard self-control which usually marked him. "I don't feel disposed to apologize, and I am tired of my position here. I must give it up."

Dr. Tootle was annoyed. It would not be easy to get another teacher of the kind at so cheap a rate.

"Come, you don't mean this," he said. "You are out of temper for the moment. Perhaps the apology could be dispensed with; I think I may promise that it can be. The lad will be no worse for his little correction. Possibly we can come to some more satisfactory arrangements for the future,—"

"No," interposed Waymark; "I have quite made up my mind. I mean to give up teaching altogether; it doesn't suit me. Of course I

am willing to come as usual the next two days."

"You are aware that this notice should have been given me at the beginning of the quarter?" hinted the principal.

"O yes. Of course you will legally owe me nothing. I am prepared for that."

"Well, I shall have to consider it. But I still think that you—"

"As far as I am concerned, the matter is decided. I go at Easter."

"Very well. I think you are blind to your own interest, but of course you do as you please. If Mrs. Tootle should press me to take out a summons against you for assault, of course I—"

"Good morning, Dr. Tootle."

The summons was not taken out, but Waymark's resolution suffered no change. There was another interview between him and the principal, from which he issued with the sum of six pounds ten in his pocket, being half the quarter's salary. He had not applied for this, but did not refuse it when it was offered. Seeing

that the total amount of cash previously in his possession was something less than five shillings, he did wisely, perhaps, to compromise with his dignity, and let Dr. Tootle come out of the situation with a certain show of generosity.

CHAPTER VI.

BY THE WAYSIDE.

"So there ends another chapter. How many more to the end of the story? How many more scenes till the farce is played out? There is something flattering to one's vanity in this careless playing with one's fate; it is edifying, moreover, to set circumstances at defiance in this way, now and then, to assert one's freedom. Freedom! What a joke the word must be to whoever is pulling the wires and making us poor puppets dance at his pleasure. Pity that we have to pay the piper so heavily for our involuntary jigging!"

A passage from the letter Waymark wrote to his friend Casti, on the evening when his school-work came to an end. That night he sought rest early, and slept well. The sensa-

tions with which he woke next morning were such as he had not experienced for a long time. He was at liberty,—with six pounds ten in his pocket. He could do what he liked and go whither he liked,—till lack of a dinner should remind him that a man's hardest master is his own body. He dressed leisurely, and, having dressed, treated himself to an egg for breakfast. Absolutely no need for hurry; the thought of school-hours dismissed for ever; an horizon quite free from the vision of hateful toil; in the real sky above-head positively a gleam of real sunshine, as if to make credible to the senses this sudden change. His mood still complete recklessness, a revolt against the idea of responsibility, indifference to all beyond the moment. Only in strange junctures is the mind capable of thus neglecting palpable difficulties and letting the day suffice to itself. The state follows upon a withdrawal of severe and painful restrictions. Thought is for a while thrown off its balance; reflection and foresight are for the moment faculties fallen out of use. Perhaps the only quite happy moments of existence.

It was Thursday; the morrow would be Good Friday; after that the intervention of two clear days before the commencement of a new week. In the mean time the sun was really shining, and the fresh spring air invited to the open ways. Waymark closed the door of his room behind him, and went down-stairs, whistling to himself. But, before reaching the bottom, he turned and went back again. It seemed warm enough to sit in one of the parks and read. He laid his hand on a book almost at haphazard, to put in his pocket; it was "The Vicar of Wakefield." Then he walked very leisurely along Kennington Road. The atmosphere seemed to breathe holiday; all the people in the streets appeared to be freshening up at the thought of a brief rest from the life-long combat. He reached Westminster Bridge, and, leaning upon the parapet, watched the boats for a full half-hour, with as much enjoyment as a child would have felt. Thence he rambled away into St. James's Park, and sat down in a sheltered spot; but the little volume lay undisturbed in his pocket; after all he was in no mood for reading to-day.

Up again, and away into busy parts of the town; finally, as far north as Tottenham Court Road. It was mid-day, and hunger had come upon him. He entered a restaurant, and refreshed himself.

Again amid the crowd. All at once he found himself laughing aloud, and had to turn aside to a shop window, lest he should attract attention. The idea was too absurd! What in the name of sense and reason did it mean, this hustling and bustling of the people on all sides, these grave-set, often fierce-set, faces, this desperate seriousness in pursuit of a thousand conflicting ends? Among all these sweating millions not enough wit to perceive that it was themselves plying the whip upon their own backs; that with themselves lay the choice between this insensate rush and welter, and a calm pilgrimage from cradle to grave. Life, woeful in its essence, they were making vile and hateful by their own brutish greed, their muddy intelligences incapable of wide views, their monstrous superstition of the saving grace of labour. Surely some day, Waymark said to

himself, a sudden light will break upon the world, and men fall to laughing so consumedly at their own folly that the very earth will dance, greeting a new era. Our friend walked on, regarding all he passed with a good-humoured pity. In this madly ordered world he had no place. He stood on one side, and looked at it all with unclouded eyes. Yesterday he had himself borne the burden; to-morrow he would have to resume it, most likely with added bitterness, if that were possible. In the mean while his faculties called no man master; he had regained the dignity of freedom.

Wondering in which direction he should next turn, he suddenly found himself repeating, with unaccountable transition of thought, the words "South Bank, Regent's Park." In all likelihood, he said to himself presently, they were suggested by some inscription on a passing omnibus, noted unconsciously. The address was that he had read in Miss Enderby's note-book. Why not ramble in that direction as well as another, and amuse himself by guessing which house it was that the governess lived in? He had not seen her since

the uproar which had terminated his connection with the young Tootles. Was it true that she had then already decided to give up her position? If not, his outbreak of temper had doubtless resulted unpleasantly for her, seeing that Mrs. Tootle would almost certainly dismiss her out of mere spite. Several times during the last two days he had thought of conveying to her a note by some means, to express in some way or other this fear and the regret it caused him; the real motive, he knew well enough, would be a hope of receiving a reply from her. But now she had perhaps left the Academy finally, and he did not know her exact address. He made his way across the Park in the direction of St. John's Wood, and had soon reached South Bank.

He had walked once the length of the road, and was looking at the nearest houses before he turned, when a lady came round the corner and paused to avoid him, as he stood in the middle of the pavement. It was Miss Enderby herself. Her embarrassment was apparently not as great as his own. She smiled with friendli-

ness; seemed indeed in a happier frame of mind than any in which Waymark had as yet seen her. But she did not offer her hand, and the other, having raised his hat, was almost on the point of passing on, when he overcame his diffidence and spoke.

"I came here to try and discover where you lived, Miss Enderby."

There was something grotesque in this abruptness; his tone only saved it from impertinence. The girl looked at him with frank surprise.

"Pray do not misunderstand me," he went on hurriedly. "I wished, if possible, to—well, to tell you that I feared I acted thoughtlessly the other day; without regard, I mean, to any consequences it might have for yourself."

"Rather I ought to thank you for defending me. It made no difference in the way you mean. It had already been decided that I should leave. I did not suit Mrs. Tootle."

It was very pleasant to look down into her pale, earnest face, and watch it as she spoke in this unrestrained way. She seemed so slight

and frail, evidently thought so depreciatingly of herself, looked as though her life had in it so little joy, that Waymark had speedily assumed a confident attitude, and gazed at her as a man does at one whom he would gladly guard and cherish.

"You were certainly unsuited for the work, in every way," he said, with a smile. "Your gentleness and conscientious efforts were quite wasted there. Still, I am sorry you have left."

"I am going into a family," were her next words, spoken almost cheerfully. "It is in the country, in Essex. There are only two children, quite young. I think I shall succeed better with them; I hope so."

"Then I suppose," Waymark said, moving a little and keeping his eyes fixed on her with an uneasy look, "I shall—I must say good-bye to you, for the last time?"

A scarcely heard "yes" fell from her lips, expressive merely of the necessity to say something. Her eyes were cast down.

"I am going to make a bold request," Waymark exclaimed, with a sort of recklessness,

though his voice expressed no less respect than hitherto. "Will you tell me where you are going to?"

She told him, without looking up, and with a recurrence to the timid manner which had marked her in the schoolroom. This gave Waymark encouragement; his confidence grew as hers diminished.

"Will you permit me to write to you—occasionally? In fact, I cannot easily reconcile myself to break off completely our acquaintance, though it has been so slight. Would you let me maintain it in this way,—so that, if you return to London, I might look forward to meeting you again some time?"

She was agitated beyond concealment; indeed concealment of the most passing shade of emotion seemed impossible in her. She grew red, and could not speak.

"I have distressed you," Waymark went on, quickly, really feeling self-reproach at having caused her pain. "I had no business to ask such a thing, and you are too kind to give me the plain answer I deserve."

"No, no, indeed," she broke in, meeting his eyes for an instant, herself evidently troubled at this construction of her embarrassment. "I shall be quite glad to keep up our acquaintance. I shall be glad to hear from you."

Then, at once feeling that she had gone too far, her confusion made her pale. Waymark held out his hand, as if to take leave.

"Thank you very much," he said, warmly. "I am very grateful."

She gave him a quick "good-bye," and then passed on. Waymark moved at once in the opposite direction, turning the corner. Then he wished to go back and notice which house she entered, but would not do so lest she should observe him. He walked straight forwards.

How the aspect of the world had changed for him in these few minutes; what an incredible revolution had come to pass in his own desires and purposes! For the first time in his life he understood the mutual dependence of human soul on soul; for the very first time he had wholly lost thought of himself in the approach to another's being. Stray loves he had had, not

a few, but always with the consciousness that he was led into them by selfish and unworthy motives; a cynical doubt of the possibility of pure passion was becoming the habit of his mind, though naturally he was disposed to idealism in all things, and instinctively rebelled against the grossness of his experiences. The circumstances of his life had been unfortunate. The intellectual atmosphere he breathed was of his own creation; the society of cultured people he had never had an opportunity of enjoying. A refined and virtuous woman had hitherto existed for him merely in the sanctuary of his imagination; he had known not one such. If he passed one in the street, the effect of the momentary proximity was only to embitter his thoughts, by reminding him of the hopeless gulf fixed between his world and that in which such creatures had their being. In revenge, he tried to soil the purity of his ideals; would have persuaded himself that the difference between the two spheres was merely in externals, that he was imposed upon by wealth, education, and superficial refinement of manners. Happily he

had never really succeeded in thus deceiving himself, and the effort had only served to aggravate his miseries. The habit of mind, however, had shown itself in the earlier stages of his acquaintance with Miss Enderby. The first sight of her had moved him somewhat, but scarcely with any foreshadowing of serious emotion. He felt that she was different from any woman with whom he had ever stood on an equal footing; but, at the same time, the very possibility of establishing more or less intimate relations with her made him distrustful of his judgment. In spite of himself, he tried to disparage her qualities. She was pretty, he admitted, but then of such a feeble, characterless type; doubtless her understanding corresponded with the weakness of her outward appearance. None the less, he had continued to observe her keenly, and had noted with pleasure every circumstance which contradicted his wilful depreciation of her. His state of mind after the thrashing he gave to young Tootle had been characteristic. What had been the cause of his violence? Certainly not uncontrollable anger,

for he had in reality been perfectly cool throughout the affair; simply, then, the pleasure of avenging Miss Enderby. And for this he had sacrificed his place, and left himself without resources. He had acted absurdly; certainly would not have repeated the absurdity had the scene been to act over again. This was not the attitude of one in love, and he knew it. Moreover, though he had thought of writing to her, it would in reality have cost him nothing if she had forthwith passed out of his sight and knowledge. Now how all this had been altered, by a mere chance meeting. The doubts had left him; she was indeed the being from a higher world that he would have liked to believe her from the first; the mysterious note of true sympathy had been struck in that short exchange of words and looks, and, though they had taken leave of each other for who could say how long, mutual knowledge was just beginning, real intercourse about to be established between them. He might write to her, and of course she would reply.

Yes, life had a new aspect; there was a

seriousness in the world's affairs which an hour ago had been altogether missing. As he walked back into the busy streets, he no longer regarded with the same contemptuous smile all the doings of men. This and that he marked with interest; here and there he was arrested by sympathy or good-natured amusement; instead of congratulating himself on his aloofness from the combat, he would gladly have entered it and taken his share of good and ill, for the striving seemed to be for nobler ends. He himself was conscious of the change, and smiled at it; yet that did not make it any the less real. He said to himself that a state of feeling so easily brought about was not very likely to endure; yet he no longer cast doubt on his sincerity, or sought an ignoble explanation of his impulses. Let it be transitory, he was at all events experiencing an emotion for which he had longed, and for which he would be better in the future, clearer in his views of life, with truer intelligence in the regions of art.

He walked without much perception of time or distance, and found himself at home just

before nightfall. He felt disposed for a quiet evening, to be spent in the companionship of his thoughts. But when he had made his coffee and eaten with appetite after the day's rambling, restlessness again possessed him. After all, it was not retirement that he needed; these strange new imaginings would consort best with motion and the liveliness of the streets. So he put out his lamp, and once more set forth. There was starlight and the soft crescent of a waning moon; the night air freshened his spirits; he sang to himself as he went along. It was long since he had been to a theatre, and just now he was so hopelessly poor that he could really afford a little extravagance. So he was soon sitting before the well-known drop of a favourite play-house, as full of light-hearted expectancy as a boy who is enjoying a holiday. The evening was delightful, and passed all too quickly.

The play over, he was in no mood to go straight home. He lit a cigar and drifted with the current westward, out of the Strand and into Pall Mall. A dispute between a cab-driver and his fare induced him to pause for a moment

under the colonnade, and, when the little cluster of people had moved on, he still stood leaning against one of the pillars, enjoying the mild air and the scent of his cigar. He felt his elbow touched, and, looking round with indifference, met the kind of greeting for which he was prepared. He shook his head and did not reply; then the sham gaiety of the voice all at once turned to a very real misery, and the girl began to beg instead of trying to entice him in the ordinary way. He looked at her again, and was shocked at the ghastly wretchedness of her daubed face. She was ill, she said, and could scarcely walk about, but must get money somehow; if she didn't, her landlady wouldn't let her sleep in the house again, and she had nowhere else to go to. There could be no mistake about the genuineness of her story, at all events as far as bodily suffering went. Waymark contrasted her state with his own, and took out what money he had in his pocket; it was the change out of a sovereign which he had received at the theatre, and he gave her it all. She stared, and did not understand.

"Are you coming with me?" she asked, feeling obliged to make a hideous attempt at professional coaxing in return for such generosity.

"Good God, no!" Waymark exclaimed. "Go home and take care of yourself."

She thanked him warmly, and turned away at once. As his eye followed her, he was aware that somebody else had drawn near to him from behind. This also was a girl, but of a different kind. She was well-dressed, and of graceful, rounded form; a veil almost hid her face, but enough could be seen to prove that she was well-looking.

"That a friend of yours?" she asked abruptly. She had the accent of an educated person, and her voice was remarkably full, clear, and sweet.

Waymark answered with a negative, looking closely at her.

"Then why did you give her all that money?"

"How do you know what I gave her?"

"I was standing just behind here, and could see."

"Well?"

"Nothing; only I should think you are one

out of a thousand. You saved me a sovereign, too; I've watched her begging of nearly a dozen people, and I couldn't have stood it much longer."

"You would have given her a sovereign?"

"I meant to, if she'd failed with you."

"Is she a friend of yours?"

"Never saw her before to-night."

"Then you must be one out of a thousand."

The girl laughed merrily, real, unaffected laughter.

"In that case," she said, "we ought to know each other, shouldn't we?"

"If we began by thinking so well of each other," returned Waymark, smiling, "we should not improbably suffer a grievous disappointment before long."

"Well, *you* might. You have to take my generosity on trust, but I have proof of yours."

"You're an original sort of girl," said Waymark, throwing away the end of his cigar. "Do you talk to everybody in this way?"

"Pooh, of course not. I shouldn't be worth much if I couldn't suit my conversation to the

man I want to make a fool of. Would you rather have me talk in the usual way? Shall I say——"

"I had rather not."

"Well, I knew that."

"And how?"

"Well, *you* don't wear a veil, if I do."

"You can read faces?"

"A little, I flatter myself. Can you?"

"Give me a chance of trying."

She raised her veil, and he inspected her for some moments, then looked away.

"Excellently well, if God did all," he observed, with a smile.

"That's out of a play," she replied quickly. "I heard it a little time ago, but I forget the answer. I'd have given anything to be able to cap you! Then you'd have put me down for a clever woman, and I should have lived on the reputation henceforth and for ever. But it's all my own, indeed; I'm not afraid of crying."

"*Do* you ever cry? I can't easily imagine it."

"Oh yes, sometimes," she answered, sighing,

and at the same time lowering her veil again. "But you haven't read my face for me."

"It's a face I'm sorry to have seen."

"Why?" she asked, holding her hands clasped before her, the palms turned outwards.

"I shall think of it often after to-night, and imagine it with all its freshness gone, and marks of suffering and degradation upon it."

"Suffering, perhaps; degradation, no. Why should I be degraded?"

"You can't help yourself. The life you have chosen brings its inevitable consequences."

"Chosen!" she repeated, with an indignant face. "How do you know I had any choice in the matter? You have no right to speak contemptuously, like that."

"Perhaps not. Certainly not. I should have said—the life you are evidently leading."

"Well, I don't know that it makes so much difference. I suppose everybody has a choice at all events between life and death, and you mean that I ought to have killed myself rather than come to this. That's my own business, however, and——"

A man had just passed behind them, and, catching the sound of the girl's voice, had turned suddenly to look at her. She, at the same moment, looked towards him, and stopped all at once in her speech.

"Are you walking up Regent Street?" she asked Waymark, in quite a different voice. "Give me your arm, will you?"

Waymark complied, and they walked together in the direction she suggested.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked. "Why are you trembling?"

"Don't look round. It's that fellow behind us; I know he is following."

"Somebody you know?"

"Yes, and hate. Worse than that, I'm afraid of him. Will you keep with me till he's gone?"

"Of course I will. What harm can he do you, though?"

"None that I know of. It's a strange stupid feeling I have. I can't bear the sight of him. Don't look round!"

"Has he been a—a friend of yours?"

"No, no; not in that way. But he follows

me about. He'll drive me out of London, I know."

"Where shall you go to then?"

"To Paris, I think; else perhaps to America. I should like to travel, and see the world. Have you ever been out of England?"

"Never. Suppose we go off to Paris together?"

"You mean it?"

"I should, if expenses were no object."

They had reached Piccadilly Circus.

"Look back now," she said, "and see if he's following still."

Waymark turned his head; the man was at a little distance behind. He stopped when he saw himself observed, and stood on the edge of the pavement, tapping his boot with his cane. He was a tall and rather burly fellow, well-dressed, with a clean-shaven face.

"Let's make haste round the corner," the girl said, "and get into the restaurant. You must have some supper with me."

"I should be very happy, had I a penny in my pocket."

"See how easily good deeds are forgotten,"

returned the other, laughing in the old way. "Now comes my turn to give proof of generosity. Come and have some supper all the same."

"No; that's out of the question."

"Fiddlestick! Surely you won't desert me when I ask your protection? Come along, and pay me back another time, if you like."

They walked round the corner, then the girl started and ran at her full speed. Waymark followed in the same way, somewhat oppressed by a sense of ridiculousness. They reached the shelter of the restaurant, and the girl led the way up-stairs, laughing immoderately.

Supper was served to them, and honoured with due attention by both. Waymark had leisure to observe his companion's face in clearer light. It was beautiful, and, better still, full of character. Strongly outlined and rather large features; cheeks exquisitely rounded and marked with sound health; full nostrils; nose almost straight from the forehead; the eyebrows making two perfect arches, dark brown lines of divine sweep; beneath them, the glory of the sweet countenance, eyes which

it is vain to endeavour to describe, but which, once looked upon, could never be forgotten. The lower lids seemed to rise a little, causing a half-twinkle which had more of bright intelligence than mere fun. If these were not the windows of a rich and beautiful soul, surely never did eyes so lie. Then the mouth, long but delicate, the upper lip a lovely bow, the lower tremulous with that same indescribable characteristic which dwelt in the corner of her eyes. Low on her forehead, and making a back ground for head and neck, a wonderful mass of the richest and brownest of rich brown hair, in orderly disorder, every lock a miracle of wreathing loveliness. But I have begun a foolish task, and may well prove foolish in my way of seeking to accomplish it. The tenderest and most delicate pencil would fail to give that face as it then was; words are useless even to suggest it, as indeed they always are useless in face-drawing, save when we wish to show you some countenance marked with grotesque deformity, or at all events with features of very pronounced and easily recognizable type. The type I speak of

can be recognized by none save those who knew it in reality; nature cast the mould and broke it.

Whilst they were eating, the girl quietly laid her hand by Waymark's, and left a sovereign on the cloth.

"Pay, and give me the change when we go out," she said.

Waymark presently bent forward to her and spoke in a low voice.

"Isn't this the man who followed us, just coming in now? Look, he has gone to the table on the right."

She looked round hastily, and shuddered, for she had met the man's eyes.

"Why did you tell me?" she exclaimed, impatiently. "Now I can't finish my supper. Wait till he has given his order, and then we will go."

Waymark examined this mysterious persecutor. In truth, the countenance was no good one, and a woman might well dislike to have such eyes turned upon her. It was a strong face; coarse originally, and, in addition to the faults of nature, it now bore the plainest traces

of a life spent in vicious gratifications. One of those faces from which you turn with instinctive repugnance, or, if you are disposed for such inquiries, in which you seek the indications of nameless and numberless iniquities. Black hair, smooth and glossy, and slightly curling about the temples. He would have done well to leave the moustache on his lip; the mouth, thus bare, was too repulsive in its undisguised ferocity of appetite. His neck was thick and red, with a great swelling at the throat. When he threw back his overcoat, he appeared in evening dress, which had the effect of making him yet more villainous-looking. As soon as he perceived Waymark and his companion, he fixed them with his greedy eyes, and scarcely looked away as long as they remained in the room. The girl seemed shrinking under this gaze, though she sat almost with her back to him. She ceased talking, and, as soon as she saw that Waymark had finished, made a sign to him to pay quickly and let them be gone. They rose, accordingly, and left. The man followed them with his eyes, but remained seated.

"Are you in a hurry to get home?" the girl asked, when they were in the street again.

"No; time is of no consequence to me."

"Do you live far off?"

"In Kennington. And you?"

"If you like, I'll show you. Let us walk quickly. I feel rather cold."

She led the way into the Strand. At no great distance from Temple Bar, she turned off into a small court.

"This is a queer place to live in," observed Waymark, as he looked up at the dark houses.

"Don't be afraid," was the good-humoured reply, as she opened the door with a latch-key. They went up two flights of stairs, then entered a room where a bright fire was burning. Waymark's conductor held a piece of paper to the flame, and lit a lamp. It was a good-sized chamber, pleasantly furnished as sitting-room; in everything the utmost order and much regard for comfort. Another door, which stood open, led into an inner room.

"Do you play?" Waymark added, seeing an open piano, with music upon it.

"I only wish I could. My landlady's daughter is giving me lessons. But I think I'm getting on. Listen to me do this exercise."

She sat down, and, with much conscientious effort, went over some simple bars. Then she looked up at her companion and caught him smiling.

"Well," she exclaimed, in a pet, "you must begin at the beginning in everything, mustn't you? Come and let me hear what you can do."

"Not even so much."

"Then don't laugh at a poor girl doing her best. You have such a queer smile too; it seems both ill-natured and good-natured at the same time. Now wait a minute till I come back."

She went into the inner room, and closed the door behind her. In five minutes it opened again. She appeared in a handsome dressing-gown and with her feet in slippers. Her glorious hair fell heavily about her shoulders, warm and fragrant as that of a goddess. And in her arms she held a beautiful cat, with white throat and white paws, else glossy black, and with golden eyes.

"This is my child. Don't you admire him? Shake hands, Grim."

"Why Grim?"

"It's short for Grimalkin, the name of a cat in a book of fairy tales I used to be fond of reading. Don't you think he's got a beautiful face, and a good deal more intelligent than some people we could mention? How I love the dear old fellow! And I think he's fond of me, too. I picked him up on our door-step, two months ago. Oh, you never saw such a wretched little object, dripping with rain, and with such a poor starved little face, and bones almost coming through the skin. He looked up at me, and begged me as plain as plain could be to have pity on him and help him; didn't you, Grimmy? And so I brought him up-stairs, and made him comfortable, and now we shall never part.—Do you like animals?"

"Yes."

"So does every one that's worth anything. I always feel a pity for them, to think they can't speak and ask us great strong creatures to be kind and gentle with them. I sometimes

pass poor little donkeys in the street which bring tears to my eyes. Do you think me foolish?"

"I should be worse than foolish myself if I did?"

"I shouldn't speak to every one like this, you know," she said, smiling. "And I certainly shouldn't introduce Grim to any one I thought wouldn't appreciate him."

The door of the room suddenly opened, and there sprang in a fresh-coloured young girl in hat and jacket, short, plump, pretty, and looking about seventeen. She started back on seeing that the room was occupied.

"What is it, Sally?" asked Grim's mistress, with a good-natured laugh.

"Why, Mrs. Walter told me you wasn't in yet; I'm awful sorry, I beg your pardon."

She spoke with a pleasant south-west-country accent.

"Do you want me?"

"It's only for Grim," returned Sally, showing something which she held wrapped up in paper. "I'd brought un home a bit o' fish, a nice bit without bone; it'll just suit he."

"Then come and give it he," said the other, with a merry glance at Waymark. "But he mustn't make a mess on the hearth-rug."

"Oh, trust un for that," cried Sally. "He won't pull it off the paper."

Grim was accordingly provided with his supper, and Sally ran away with a "good-night."

"Who's that?" Waymark asked. "Where on earth does she come from?"

"She's from Weymouth. They talk queerly there, don't they? She lives in the house, and goes to business. Sally and I are great friends."

"Do you come from the country?" Waymark inquired, as she sat down in an easy-chair and watched the cat eating.

"No, I'm a London girl. I've never been out of the town since I was a little child."

"Not even a few miles out?"

"Never out of the streets. If I'm well off this summer I mean to go to the sea-side. I've said I would for the last five years, but I've never managed it yet. I want to go to Hastings. My mother took me there—goodness knows how long ago, and I remember it as well as possible."

"And how old are you now?"

"Guess."

"Not twenty."

"Eighteen a month ago. All my life before me, isn't it?"

Waymark kept silence for a moment.

"How do you like my room?" she asked, suddenly, looking round.

"It's very comfortable. I always thought there were nothing but business places all about here. I should rather like to live in the very middle of the town, like this."

"Should you? That's just what I like. Oh, how I enjoy the noise and the crowds! I should be ill if I had to live in one of those long, dismal streets, where the houses are all the same shape, and costermongers go bawling about all day long. I suppose you live in a place like that?"

"Very much the same."

In taking his handkerchief out, Waymark just happened to feel a book in his overcoat-pocket. He drew it forth to see what it was, having forgotten entirely that he had been carrying the

worthy Dr. Primrose about with him since morning.

"What's that?" asked the girl. "Will you let me look?"

"'The Vicar of Wakefield.' Have you read it?"

"No. Is it a tale? Lend it me; will you?"

"Do you read books?"

"Oh yes; why not? Let me keep this till you come again. Is this your name written here—Osmond Waymark?"

"Yes. And what is your name?"

"Ida Starr."

"Ida? That's a beautiful name. I was almost afraid to ask you, for fear it should be something common—Sarah, or Louisa, or the like."

"And why shouldn't I have a common name?"

"Because you are by no means a common girl."

"You think not? Well, perhaps you are right. But may I keep the book till I see you again?"

"I had better give it you, for it isn't very likely you will see me again."

"Why not?"

"You remind me," Waymark exclaimed suddenly. "Here; this is your change. Suppose I had run off with it?"

"I certainly shouldn't have thought of it. But what has that got to do with seeing me again?"

"Everything. My acquaintance would be anything but profitable to you. I often haven't enough money to live on, and—"

Ida stooped down and played for a few moments with Grim, who turned over lazily on to his back, and stroked his mistress's hands delicately with his soft white paws.

"But you are a gentleman," she said, rising again, and rustling over the pages of the book she still held. "Are you in the city?"

"The Lord deliver me!"

"What then?"

"I am nothing."

"Then you must be rich."

"It by no means follows. Yesterday I was a teacher in a school. To-day I am what is called out of work."

"A teacher. But I suppose you'll get another place."

"No. I've given it up because I couldn't endure it any longer."

"And how are you going to live?"

"I have no idea."

"Then you must have been very foolish to give away your money like that to-night."

"I don't pretend to much wisdom. If I had had another sovereign in my pocket, no doubt I should have given it you before this, and you wouldn't have refused it."

"How do you know?" she asked, sharply. "Why should you think me selfish?"

"Certainly I have no reason to. And by the bye, I already owe you money for the supper. I will send it you to-morrow."

"Why not bring it?"

"Better not. I have a good deal of an unpleasant quality which people call pride, and I don't care to make myself uncomfortable unnecessarily."

"You can't have more pride than I have. Look." She held out her hands. "Will you

be my friend, really my friend? You understand me?"

"I think I understand, but I doubt whether it is possible."

"Everything is possible. Will you shake hands with me, and, when you come to see me again, let us meet as if I were a modest girl, and you had got to know me in a respectable house, and not in the street at midnight?"

"You really wish it? You are not joking?"

"I am in sober earnest, and I wish it. You won't refuse?"

"If I did I should refuse a great happiness."

He took her hand and again released it.

"And now look at the time," said she, pointing to a clock on the mantelpiece. "Half-past one. How will you get home?"

"Walk. It won't take me more than an hour. May I light my pipe before I start?"

"Of course you may. When shall I see you again?"

"Shall we say this night next week?"

"Very well. Come here any time you like in the evening. I will be at home after

six. And then I can give you your book back."

Waymark lit his pipe, stooped to give Grim a stroke, and buttoned up his coat.

"You understand, Grim," said Ida to the cat; "this one is different from the others; you'll remember when he comes again next week."

She lit a candle, and led the way down-stairs. They shook hands again, and parted.

CHAPTER VII.

RENT DAY.

IT was considerably after his usual hour when Waymark awoke on Good Friday morning. He had been troubled throughout the night with a strangely vivid dream, which seemed to have repeated itself several times; when he at length started into consciousness the anguish of the vision was still upon him. In this dream he had been standing before the altar in a church, and by his side a woman who was about to become his wife. Her face was covered with a veil, and he was making desperate efforts to discern her features through the gauze, for a horrible suspicion possessed him that somehow she was not his real bride. He could not raise the veil to satisfy himself, for she was holding both his hands. Just as the clergyman addressed to him

the question whether he would take this woman to wife, and whilst the affirmative trembled on his lips, the clasping hands were suddenly severed by another woman, also veiled, who sprang forward and clung to him. The repulsed woman fell back with a moan; the new-comer took her place. Her countenance also the dreamer tried vainly to discern; his doubt and trouble had increased. But the clergyman's solemn question still waited his reply, and, with a great effort, he spoke the "I will." Immediately a shriek rang out behind him, chilling his blood. He turned. The rejected woman had thrown back her veil, and a death-like face stared upon him. Mad with a conflict of emotions, he wildly called out her name,—and so awoke.

He rose at once, and dressed quickly, doing his best to shake off the clinging misery of his sleep. In a little while it had passed, and he tried to go over in his mind the events of the preceding day. Were they, too, only fragments of a long dream? Surely so many and strange events could not have crowded themselves into

one period of twelve hours; and for him, whose days passed with such dreary monotony. The interview with Maud Enderby seemed so unnaturally long ago; that with Ida Starr, so impossibly fresh and recent. Yet both had undoubtedly taken place. He, who but yesterday morning had felt so bitterly his loneliness in the world, and, above all, the impossibility of what he most longed for—woman's companionship—found himself all at once on terms of at least friendly intimacy with two women, both young, both beautiful, yet so wholly different. Each answered to an ideal which he cherished, and the two ideals were so diverse, so mutually exclusive. The experience had left him in a curious frame of mind. For the present, he felt cool, almost indifferent, to both his new acquaintances. He had asked and obtained leave to write to Maud Enderby; what on earth could he write about? How could he address her? He had promised to go and see Ida Starr, on a most impracticable footing. Was it not almost certain that, before the day came round, her caprice would have vanished, and his re-

ception would prove anything but a flattering one? The feelings which both girls had at the time excited in him seemed artificial; in his present mood he in vain tried to resuscitate his interest either in the one or the other. It was as though he had over-exerted his emotional powers, and they lay exhausted. Weariness was the only reality of which he was conscious. He must turn his mind to other things. Having breakfasted, he remembered what day it was, and presently took down a volume of his Goethe, opening at the Easter morning scene in Faust, favourite reading with him. This inspired him with a desire to go into the open air; it was a bright day, and there would be life in the streets. Just as he began to prepare himself for walking, there came a knock at his door, and Julian Casti entered.

"Halloa!" Waymark cried. "I thought you told me you were engaged with your cousin to-day."

"I was, but I sent her a note yesterday to say I was unable to meet her."

"Then why didn't you write at the same

time and tell me you were coming? I might have gone out for the day."

"I had no intention of coming, then."

"What's the matter? You look out of sorts."

"I don't feel in very good spirits. By the bye, I heard from the publishers yesterday. Here's the note."

It simply stated that Messrs. So-and-so had given their best attention to the play of 'Stilicho,' which Mr. Casti had been so good as to submit to them, and regretted their inability to make any proposal for its publication, seeing that its subject was hardly likely to excite popular interest. They thanked the author for offering it to them, and begged to return the MS.

"Well, it's a disappointment," said Waymark, "but we must try again. I myself am so hardened to this kind of thing that I fear you will think me unsympathetic. It's like having a tooth out. You never quite get used to it, but you learn after two or three experiments to gauge the moment's torture at its true value. Re-direct your parcel, and fresh hope beats out the old discouragement."

"It wasn't altogether that which was making me feel restless and depressed," Casti said, when they had left the house and were walking along. "I suppose I'm not quite right in health just at present. I seem to have lost my natural good spirits of late; the worst of it is, I can't settle to my day's work as I used to. In fact, I have just been applying for a new place, that of dispenser at the All Saints' Hospital. If I get it, it would make my life a good deal more independent. I should live in lodgings of my own, and have much more time to myself."

Waymark encouraged the idea strongly. But his companion could not be roused to the wonted cheerfulness. After a long silence, he all at once put a strange question, and in an abashed way.

"Waymark, have you ever been in love?"

Osmond laughed and looked at his friend curiously.

"Many thousand times," was his reply.

"No, but seriously," urged Julian.

"With desperate seriousness for two or three days at a time. Never longer."

"Well now, answer me in all earnestness. Do you believe it possible to love a woman whom in almost every respect you regard as your inferior, who you know can't understand your thoughts and aspirations, who has no interest in anything above daily needs?"

"Impossible to say. Is she good-looking?"

"Suppose she is not; yet not altogether plain."

"Then does she love you?"

Julian reddened at the direct application.

"Suppose she seems to."

"Seems to, eh?—On the whole, I should say that I couldn't declare it possible or the contrary till I had seen the girl. I myself should be very capable of falling desperately in love with a girl who hadn't an idea in her head, and didn't know her letters. All I should ask would be passion in return, and—well, yes, a pliant and docile character."

"You are right; the character would go for much. Never mind, we won't speak any more of the subject. It was an absurd question to ask you."

"Nevertheless, you have made me very curious."

"I will tell you more some other time; not now. Tell me about your own plans. What decision have you come to?"

Waymark professed to have formed no plan whatever. This was not strictly true. For some months now, ever and again, as often indeed as he had felt the burden of his school-work more than usually intolerable, his thoughts had turned to the one person who could be of any assistance to him, and upon whom he had any kind of claim; that was, Abraham Woodstock, his father's old friend. He had held no communication with Mr. Woodstock for four years; did not even know whether he was living. But of him he still thought, now that absolute need was close at hand, and, as soon as Julian Casti had left him to-day, he examined a directory, to ascertain whether the accountant still occupied the house in St. John Street Road. Apparently he did. And the same evening Waymark made up his mind to visit Mr. Woodstock on the following day.

The old gentleman was sitting alone in his "study" when the servant announced Waymark's visit. His surroundings were precisely the same in character as they had been for the last thirty years; on floor and tables the same litter of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, the shelves exhibiting the same rows of Blue-books and Annual Registers. In personal appearance he was scarcely changed since that visit of little Ida's which we remember. Perhaps the eye was not quite so vivid, the skin on forehead and cheeks a trifle less smooth, but his countenance showed the same healthy glow; there was the same repose of force in the huge limbs, and his voice had lost nothing of its resonant firmness. Yet to Waymark it was very soon obvious that something was lacking in the old *viveur;* there was a diminution of his cheerful brutality; he was more given to moments of mental absence, during which the brow became wrinkled. Possibly his palate suffered from the sameness of the daily draught of life, or the presence of dregs had begun to annoy him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as Waymark entered.

"You! I've been wondering where you were to be found."

The visitor held out his hand, and Abraham, though he did not rise, smiled not unpleasantly as he gave his own.

"You wanted to see me?" Waymark asked.

"Well, yes. I suppose you've come about the mines."

"Mines? What mines?"

"Oh, then you haven't come about them. You didn't know the Llwg Valley people have begun to pay a dividend?"

Waymark remembered that one of his father's unfortunate speculations had been the purchase of certain shares in some Welsh mines. The money thus invested had remained, for the last nine years, wholly unproductive. Mr. Woodstock explained that things were looking up with the company in question, who had just declared a dividend of four per cent. on all their paid-up shares.

"In other words," exclaimed Waymark eagerly, "they owe me some money?"

"Which you can do with, eh?" said Abraham,

with a twinkle of good-humoured commiseration in his eye.

"Perfectly. What are the details?"

"There are fifty ten-pound shares. Dividend accordingly twenty pounds."

"By Jingo! How is it to be got at?"

"Do you feel disposed to sell the shares?" asked the old man, looking up sideways, and still smiling.

"No; on the whole I think not."

"Ho, ho, Osmond, where have you learnt prudence, eh?—Why don't you sit down?—If you didn't come about the mines, why did you come, eh?"

"Not to mince matters," said Waymark, taking a chair, and speaking in an off-hand way which cost him much effort, "I came to ask you to help me to some way of getting a living."

"Hollo!" exclaimed the old man, chuckling. "Why, I should have thought you'd made your fortune by this time. Poetry doesn't pay, it seems?"

"It doesn't. One has to buy experience.

It's no good saying that I ought to have been guided by you five years ago. Of course I wish I had been, but it wasn't possible. The question is, do you care to help me now?"

"What's your idea?" asked Abraham, playing with his watch-guard, a smile as of inward triumph flitting about his lips.

"I have none. I only know that I've been half-starved for a year in the cursed business of teaching, and that I can't stand it any longer. I want some kind of occupation that will allow me to have three good meals every day, and leave me my evenings free. That isn't asking much, I imagine; most men manage to find such. I don't care what the work is, not a bit. If it's of a kind which gives a prospect of getting on, all the better; if that's out of the question, well, three good meals and a roof shall suffice."

"You're turning out a devilish sensible lad, Osmond," said Mr. Woodstock, still smiling. "Better late than never, as they say. But I don't see what you can do. You literary chaps get into the way of thinking that any fool can make a man of business, and that it's only a

matter of condescending to turn your hands to desk work and the way's clear before you. It's a mistake, and you're not the first that'll find it out."

"This much I know," replied Waymark, with decision. "Set me to anything that can be learnt, and I'll be perfect in it in a quarter the time it would take the average man."

"You want your evenings free?" asked the other, after a short reflection. "What will you do with them?"

"I shall give them to literary work."

"I thought as much. And you think you can be a man of business and a poet at the same time? No go, my boy. If you take up business, you drop poetizing. Those two horses never yet pulled at the same shaft, and never will."

"I don't see why business and literature shouldn't go on together as well as business and politics."

"Ho, ho! That's all you know about it, Osmond. Why, lad, politics *is* business, just the highest kind, and needing the shrewdest

head. But poetry, and tale-writing, and that kind of nonsense, makes a man unfit for anything practical. I don't believe you'd stick at a desk for a fortnight.—Have you made any money out of your writing yet?"

"A few pounds."

"And do you think it would ever come to anything?"

"If I live ten years, my name will be among the leading writers of the time."

"How do you know, eh?" asked Abraham, shortly.

"Simply because I have made up my mind that it shall be."

Mr. Woodstock pondered for a few moments. He thrust out his great legs with feet crossed on the fender, and with his hands jingled coin in his trouser-pockets. Waymark watched his face curiously, and envied the experience and command which were the outcome of half a century's keen dealing with the world's affairs. How hard to duly appreciate the working of that brain!—how yet more difficult to guess at the shades of feeling which remained valid in

such a nature! A certain warmth of sentiment towards the old man, such as he did not remember to have felt before, began to grow in Waymark's heart. He wished that there might be friendship between them.

"I tell you what," Abraham suddenly began. "There's only one thing I know of at present that you're likely to be able to do. Suppose I gave you the job of collecting my rents down in Westminster?"

"Weekly rents?"

"Weekly. It's a rough quarter, and they're a shady lot of customers. You wouldn't find the job over-pleasant, but you might try, eh?"

"What would it bring me in,—to go at once to the point?"

"The rents average twenty-five pounds. Your commission would be seven per cent. You might reckon, I dare say, on five-and-thirty shillings a week."

"What is the day for collecting?"

"Mondays; but there's lots of 'em you'd have to look up several times in a week. If you like I'll

go round myself on Tuesday—Easter Monday's no good—and you can come with me."

"I will go by all means," exclaimed Waymark. "The thing is quite to my taste. Do I understand that you make me the offer definitively?"

"Well, it's usual to give some guarantee," said Mr. Woodstock, with a keen look. "Suppose you took it into your head to disappear some week with the rents?"

"You know very well I shouldn't make such a fool of myself."

"I don't know anything of the kind. Tell you what. Leave in my hands this Llwg Valley dividend."

Waymark was revolted, and looked into the old man's face with something of contempt. But the keen, quiet eye mastered him once more. He smiled and acquiesced.

Talk of a more general kind followed, and continued for some half-hour. When Waymark rose at length, he expressed his gratitude for the assistance promised.

"Well, well," said the other, "wait till we see how things work. I shouldn't wonder if you

throw it up after a week or two. However, be here on Tuesday at ten. And prompt, mind: I don't wait for any man."

Waymark was punctual enough on the following Tuesday, and the two rode in a hansom as far as Broad Sanctuary. Hence they walked in the direction of the least savoury part of Westminster. It was rather a foggy morning, and the district appeared at its worst, if indeed there could be said to be degrees in the prevalent vileness. Mr. Woodstock paused in his walk in front of a small public-house over the entrance to which was a clock—whence the current name of the Clock House—and drew his companion's attention to a name written up close by.

"You see," he said, "that's Litany Lane. There are sixteen houses in it, and they're all mine. Half way down, on the left, runs off Jubilee Court, where there are fourteen houses, and those are all mine, too."

Waymark looked. Litany Lane was a narrow passage, with houses only on one side; opposite to them ran a long high wall, apparently the limit of some manufactory. Two posts set up

at the entrance to the Lane showed that it was no thoroughfare for vehicles. The houses were of three storeys. There were two or three dirty little shops, but the rest were ordinary lodging-houses, the front-doors standing wide open as a matter of course, exhibiting a dusky passage, filthy stairs, with generally a glimpse right through into the yard in the rear. In Jubilee Court the houses were smaller, and had their fronts white-washed, the white having become a dirty yellow. Under the archway which led into the Court were fastened up several written notices of rooms to be let at this or that number. The paving was in evil repair, forming here and there considerable pools of water, the stench and the colour whereof led to the supposition that the inhabitants facilitated domestic operations by emptying casual vessels out of the windows. The dirty little casements on the ground-floor exhibited without exception a rag of red or white curtain on the one side, prevailing fashion evidently requiring no corresponding drapery on the other. The Court was a *cul de sac*, and at the farther end stood a receptacle for ashes, the

odour from which was intolerable. Strangely enough, almost all the window-sills displayed flower-pots, and, despite the wretched weather, several little bird-cages hung out from the upper storeys. In one of them a lark was singing furiously.

They began their progress through the tenements, commencing at the top of Litany Lane. Many of the rooms were locked, the occupiers being away at their work, but in such case the rent had generally been left with some other person in the house, and was forthcoming. But now and then neither rent nor tenant was to be got at, and dire were the threats which Abraham bade the neighbours convey to the defaulters on their return. His way with one and all was curt and vigorous; to Waymark it seemed needlessly brutal. A woman pleading inability to make up her total sum would be cut short with a thunderous oath, and the assurance that, if she did not pay up in a day or two, every stick would be carried off. Pitiful pleading for time had absolutely no effect upon Abraham. Here and there a tenant would

complain of high rent and point out a cracked ceiling, a rotten piece of stairs, or something else imperatively calling for renovation. "If you don't like the room, clear out," was the landlord's sole reply to all such speeches.

In one place they came across an old Irish woman engaged in washing. The room was hung with reeking clothes from wall to wall. For a time it was difficult to distinguish objects through the steam, and Waymark, making his way in, stumbled and almost fell over an open box. From the box at once proceeded a miserable little wail, broken by as terrible a cough as a child could be afflicted with; and Waymark then perceived that the box was being used as a cradle, in which lay a baby gasping in the agonies of some throat disease, whilst drops from the wet clothing trickled on to its face. The old woman was its grandmother. She was in a state—doubtless chronic—of partial intoxication, and was disposed to be very jocose.

"The rint, was it? Sure, and it seemed to be always rint-day. But it wasn't often that Mr. Woodstock did her the honour to come and

ask for it himself. And would he taste just a dhrop of rale Oirish, now?"

"Come on, old lady," said Mr. Woodstock. "We've no time to waste. Where's the money?"

"The money? Sure, an' it's little we see of it, these hard times. And the child's ill, sure, an' it was only this morning we paid the doctor a half-crown. P'r'aps the young jintleman 'ull taste a dhrop?"

"Have you got the rent or not?" asked Abraham, savagely.

"Sure, and I should have it somewhere, Mr. Woodstock. It was only this morning, when my daughter was paying the doctor that she said it was rint-day, and we put the money in the copper for safety, so I could feel it whilst I washed. And here it is, sure enough," she added, fishing up five shillings and sixpence from beneath a mass of clothing which was bubbling over the fire.

"Here's your receipt, then, and be a bit quicker when the new collector comes round next week."

"And is that the new collector?" asked the

old woman, with a chuckle. "Sure, he's a sweet bo-oy. Rint-day 'ill come asier for the young women, faith."

On leaving this house, they entered Jubilee Court. Here, sitting on the doorstep of the first house, was a child of apparently nine or ten, and seemingly a girl, though the nondescript attire might have concealed either sex, and the face was absolutely sexless in its savagery. Her hair was cut short, and round her neck was a bit of steel chain, fastened with string. On seeing the two approach, she sprang up, and disappeared with a bound into the house.

"That's the most infernal little devil in all London, I do believe," said Mr. Woodstock, as they began to ascend the stairs. "Her mother owes two weeks, and if she don't pay something to-day, I'll have her out. She'll be shamming illness, you'll see. The child ran up to prepare her."

The room in question was at the top of the house. It proved to be quite bare of furniture. On a bundle of straw in one corner was lying a woman, to all appearances *in extremis*. Any

description of her state of body would be too disgusting to read. She lay looking up to the ceiling, her face distorted into the most ghastly anguish, her lips foaming; her whole frame shivered incessantly.

"Ha, I thought so," exclaimed Abraham, as he entered. "Now, we're too old birds to be caught with this kind of chaff. Are you going to pay anything this week?"

The woman seemed to be unconscious.

"Have you got the rent?" asked Mr. Woodstock, turning to the child, who had crouched down in another corner.

"No, we ain't," was the reply, with a terribly fierce glare from eyes which rather seemed to have looked on ninety years than nine.

"Then out you go! Come, you, get up now; d' you hear? Very well; come along, Osmond; you take hold of that foot, and I'll take this. Now, drag her out on to the landing."

They dragged her about half-way to the door, when suddenly Waymark felt the foot he had hold of withdrawn from his grasp, and at once the woman sprang upright. Then she fell on

him, tooth and nail, screaming like some evil beast. Had not Abraham forthwith come to the rescue, he would have been seriously torn about the face, but just in time the woman's arms were seized in a giant grip, and she was flung bodily out of the room, falling with a crash upon the landing. Then from her and the child arose a most terrific uproar of commination; both together yelled such foulness and blasphemy as can only be conceived by those who have made a special study of this vocabulary, and the vituperation of the child was, if anything, richer in quality than the mother's. The former, moreover, did not confine herself to words, but all at once sent her clenched fist through every pane of glass in the window, heedless of the fearful cuts she inflicted upon herself, and uttering a wild yell of triumph at each fracture. Mr. Woodstock was too late to save his property, but he caught up the creature like a doll, and flung her out also on to the landing, then coolly locked the door behind him, put the key in his pocket, and, letting Waymark pass on first, descended the stairs. The yelling and screech-

ing behind them continued as long as they were in the Court, but it drew no attention from the neighbours, who were far too accustomed to this kind of thing to heed it.

In the last house they had to enter, they came upon a man asleep on a bare bedstead. It was difficult to wake him. When at length he was aroused, he glared at them for a moment with one blood-shot eye, (the other was sightless,) looking much like a wild beast which doubts whether to spring or to shrink back.

"Rent, Slimy," said Mr. Woodstock, with more of good-humour than usual.

The man pointed to the mantel-piece, where the pieces of money were found to be lying. Waymark looked round the room. Besides the bedstead, a table was the only article of furniture, and on it stood a dirty jug and a glass. Lying about was a strange collection of miscellaneous articles, heaps of rags and dirty paper, bottles, boots, bones. There were one or two chairs in process of being new-caned; there was a wooden frame for holding glass, such as is carried about by itinerant glaziers,

and, finally, there was a knife-grinding instrument, adapted for wheeling about the streets. The walls were all scribbled over with obscene words and drawings. On the inside of the door had been fitted two enormous bolts, one above and one below.

"How's trade, Slimy?" inquired Mr. Woodstock.

"Which trade, Mr. Woodstock?" asked the man in return, in a very husky voice.

"Oh, trade in general."

"There never was sich times since old Scratch died," replied Slimy, shaking his head. "No chance for a honest man."

"Then you're in luck. This is the new collector, d'you see."

"I've been a-looking at him," said Slimy, whose one eye, for all that, had seemed busy all the time in quite a different direction. "I seen him somewheres, but I can't just make out where."

"Not many people you haven't seen, I think," said Abraham, nodding, as he went out of the room. Waymark followed, and was glad to get into the open streets again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MAN-TRAP.

Julian Casti was successful in his application for the post of dispenser at the All Saints' Hospital, and shortly after Easter he left the shop in Oxford Street, taking lodgings in Beaufort Street, Chelsea. His first evening there was spent in Waymark's company, and there was much talk of the progress his writing would make, now that his hours of liberty were so considerably extended. For the first time in his life he was enjoying the sense of independence. Waymark talked of moving from Walcot Square, in order to be nearer to his friend. He, too, was possessed of more freedom than had been the case for a long time, and his head was full of various fancies. They would encourage each other in their work, afford by mutual appreciation that stimulus which is so essential to the young artist.

But in this world, though man may propose, it is woman who disposes. And at this moment, Julian's future was being disposed of in a manner he could not well have foreseen.

Harriet Smales had heard with unconcealed pleasure of his leaving the shop and taking lodgings of his own. She had been anxious to come and see the rooms, and, though the following Sunday was appointed for her visit, she could not wait so long, but, to her cousin's surprise, presented herself at the house one evening, and was announced by the landlady, who looked suspicious. Julian, with some nervousness, hastened to explain that the visitor was a relative, which, by the way, did not in the least alter his landlady's preconceived ideas. Harriet sat down and looked about her with a sigh of satisfaction. If she could but have such a home! Girls had no chance of getting on as men did. If only her father could have lived, things would have been different. Now she was thrown on the world, and had to depend upon her own hard work. Then she gave way to an hysterical sob, and Julian—who felt sure

that the landlady was listening at the door—could only beg her nervously not to be so down-hearted.

"Whatever success I have," he said to her, "you will share it."

"If I thought so!" she sighed, looking down at the floor, and moving the point of her umbrella up and down. Harriet had saturated her mind—or whatever succedaneum for mind her constitution comprised—with the fiction of penny weeklies, and owed to this training all manner of awkward affectations which she took to be the most becoming manifestations of a susceptible heart. Every now and then she would express herself in phrases of the most absurdly high-flown kind, and of late she had got into the habit of heaving profound sighs between her sentences. We know that Julian was not blind to the meaning of all this. His active employments during the past week had kept his thoughts from brooding on the matter, and he had all but dismissed the trouble it had given him. But this visit, and Harriet's demeanour throughout it, revived all his anxieties.

He came back from accompanying his cousin part of her way home in a very uneasy frame of mind. What could he do to disabuse the poor girl of the unhappy hopes she entertained? The thought of giving pain to any most humble creature was itself a pain unendurable to Julian. His was one of those natures to which self-sacrifice is infinitely easier than the idea of sacrificing another to his own desires or even necessities, a vice of weakness often more deeply and widely destructive than the vices of strength.

The visit having been paid, it was arranged that on the following Sunday Julian should meet his cousin at the end of Gray's Inn Road as usual. On that day the weather was fine, but Harriet came out in no mood for a walk. She had been ailing for a day or two, she said, and felt incapable of exertion; Mrs. Ogle was away from home for the day, too, and it would be better they should spend the afternoon together in the house. Julian of course assented, as always, and they established themselves in the parlour behind the shop. In the course of talk, the girl made mention of an engraving

Julian had given her a week or two before, and said that she had had it framed and hung it in her bed-room.

"Do come up and look at it," she exclaimed; "there's no one in the house. I want to ask you if you can find a better place for it. It doesn't show so well where it is."

Julian hesitated for a moment, but she was already leading the way, and he could not refuse to follow. They went up to the top of the house, and entered a little chamber which might have been more tidy, though it was decently furnished. The bed was made in a slovenly way, the mantelpiece was dusty, and the pictures on the walls hung askew. Harriet closed the door behind them, and proceeded to point out the new picture, and discuss the various positions which had occurred to her. Julian would have decided the question as speedily as possible, and once or twice moved to return down-stairs, but each time the girl found something new to detain him. Opening a drawer, she took out several paltry little ornaments, which she wished him to admire, and, in showing

them, stood very close by his side. All at once the door of the room was pushed open, and a woman ran in. On seeing the stranger present, she darted back with an exclamation of surprise.

"Oh, Miss Smales, I didn't know as you wasn't alone! I heard you moving about, an come just to arst you to lend me——but never mind, I'm so sorry; why didn't you lock the door?"

And she bustled out again, apparently in much confusion.

Harriet had dropped the thing she held in her hand, and stood looking at her cousin as if dismayed.

"I never thought any one was in," she said, nervously. "It's Miss Mould, the lodger. She went out before I did, and I never heard her come back. Whatever will she think!"

"But of course," he stammered, "you will explain everything to her. She knows who I am, doesn't she?"

"I don't think so, and, even if she did"—

She stopped, and stood with eyes on the ground, doing her best to display maiden con-

fusion. Then she began to cry. Harriet always had the water-works astonishingly under command.

"But surely, surely there is no need to distress yourself," exclaimed Julian, almost distracted, beginning to be dimly conscious of all manner of threatening possibilities. "I will speak to the woman myself, and clear you of every—— Oh but this is all nonsense. Let us go down at once, Harriet. What a pity you asked me to come up here!"

It was the nearest to a reproach that he had ever yet addressed to her. His face showed clearly how distressed he was, and that on his own account more than hers, for he could not conceive any blame save on himself for being so regardless of appearances.

"Go as quietly as ever you can," Harriet whispered. "The stairs creak so. Step very softly."

This was terrible to the poor fellow. To steal down in this guilty way was as bad as a confession of evil intentions, and he so entirely innocent of a shadow of evil even in his thought. Yet he could not but do as she bade him. Even on the stairs she urged him in a very loud

whisper to be yet more cautious. He was out of himself with mortification; and felt angry with her for bringing him into such ignominy. In the back parlour once more, he took up his hat at once.

"You mustn't go yet," whispered Harriet. "I'm sure that woman's listening on the stairs. You must talk a little. Let's talk so she can hear us. Suppose she should tell Mrs. Ogle."

"I can't see that it matters," said Julian, with annoyance. "I will myself see Mrs. Ogle."

"No, no! The idea! I should have to leave at once. Whatever shall I do if she turns me away, and won't give me a reference or anything!"

Even in a calmer mood, Julian's excessive delicacy would have presented an affair of this kind in a grave light to him; at present he was wholly incapable of distinguishing between true and false, or of gauging these fears at their true value. The mere fact of the girl making so great a matter out of what should have been so easy to explain and have done with, caused an exaggeration of the difficulty in his own mind. He felt that he ought of course to justify himself

before Mrs. Ogle, and would have been capable of doing so had only Harriet taken the same sensible view; but her apparent distress seemed —even to him—so much more like conscious guilt than troubled innocence, that such a task would cost him the acutest suffering. For nearly an hour he argued with her, trying to convince her how impossible it was that the woman who had surprised them should harbour any injurious suspicions.

"But she knows—" began Harriet, and then stopped, her eyes falling.

"What does she know?" demanded her cousin in surprise; but could get no reply to his question. However, his arguments seemed at length to have a calming effect, and, as he took leave, he even affected to laugh at the whole affair. For all that, he had never suffered such mental trouble in his life as during this visit and throughout the evening which followed. The mere thought of having been obliged to discuss such things with his cousin filled him with inexpressible shame and misery. Waymark came to spend the evening with him, but found

poor entertainment. Several times Julian was on the point of relating what had happened, and asking for advice, but he found it impossible to broach the subject. There was an ever-recurring anger against Harriet in his mind, too, for which at the same time he reproached himself. He dreaded the next meeting between them.

Now the discerning reader, by which I mean the one who has been led by inclination or dire circumstance to study female humanity in the phase represented by Harriet Smales, will already be at no loss to understand the significance of that scene up-stairs; needless to explain in detail that the situation was all pre-planned between the girl and her friend Miss Mould. It was a plan involving some delicacy of judgment, moreover. Harriet, though herself quite innocent of fine feeling and nice complexities of conscience, was well aware of the existence of such properties in her cousin. She neither admired nor despised him for possessing them; they were of unknown value, indifferent to her, indeed, until she became aware of the practical use that might be made of them. Like most

narrow-minded girls, she became a shrewd reader of character, when her affections and interests were concerned, and could calculate Julian's motives, and the course wherein they would lead him, with much precision. She knew too well that he did not love her in the way she desired, but at the same time she knew that he was capable of making almost any sacrifice to spare her humiliation and trouble, especially if he felt that her unhappiness was in any way caused by himself. Herein Harriet was typical of the people whose lack of principle arises from their lack of imagination; they do not disbelieve the existence of noble motive, but, recognizing its presence in this and that person, are simply unable to comprehend the nature of such a characteristic. Its practical display they foresee and can calculate upon, as Harriet did in the present instance.

Thus it came about that, on the Tuesday evening of the ensuing week, Julian was startled by his landlady announcing another visit from Miss Smales. Harriet came into the room with a veil over her face, and sank on a chair, sobbing.

What she had feared had come to pass. The lodger had told Mrs. Ogle of what had taken place in her absence on the Sunday afternoon, and Harriet had received notice that she must find another place at once. Mrs. Ogle was a woman of severe virtue, and would not endure the suspicion of wrong-doing under her roof. To whom could she come for advice and help, but to Julian?

Julian was overwhelmed. His perfectly sincere nature was incapable of suspecting a far more palpable fraud. He started up with the intention of going forthwith to Gray's Inn Road, but Harriet clung to him and held him back. The idea was vain. The lodger, Miss Mould, had long entertained a spite against her, Harriet said, and had so exaggerated this story in relating it to Mrs. Ogle, that the latter, and her husband, had declared that Casti should not as much as put foot in their shop again.

"If you only knew what they've been told!" sobbed the girl, still clinging to Julian. "They wouldn't listen to a word you said. As if I could have thought of such a thing happening,

and that woman to say all the bad things of us she can turn her tongue to! I sha'n't never get another place; I'm thrown out on the wide world!"

It was a phrase she had got out of her penny fiction; and very remarkable indeed was the mixture of acting and real sentiment which marked her utterances throughout.

Julian's shame and anger began to turn to compassion. A woman in tears was a sight which always caused him the keenest distress.

"But," he cried, with tears in his own eyes, "it is impossible that you should suffer all this through me, and I not even make an attempt to clear you of such vile charges!"

"It was my own fault. I was thoughtless. I ought to have known that people's always ready to think harm. But I think of nothing when I'm with you, Julian!"

He had disengaged himself from her hands, and was holding one of them in his own. But, as she made this last confession, she threw her arms about his neck and drooped her head against his bosom.

"Oh, if you only felt to me like I do to you!" she sobbed.

No man can hear without some return of emotion a confession from a woman's lips that she loves him. Harriet was the only girl whom Julian had ever approached in familiar intercourse; she had no rival to fear amongst living women; the one rival to be dreaded was altogether out of the sphere of her conceptions,—the ideal love of a poet's heart and brain. But the ideal is often least present to us when most needed. Here was love; offer but love to a poet, and does he pause to gauge its quality? The sudden whirl of conflicting emotions left Julian at the mercy of the instant's impulse. She was weak; she was suffering through him; she loved him.

"Be my wife, then," he whispered, returning her embrace, "and let me guard you from all who would do you harm."

She uttered a cry of delight, and—let it be remembered for her—the cry was a true one.

END OF VOL. I.

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